

An interview with Ewing H. Miller (1)

EWING H. MILLER

An Interview Conducted by

Jane C. Hazledine

April 13, 1981

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# NARRATOR DATA SHEET

April 13, 1981  
DATE

Name of narrator: Ewing H. Miller

Address: 326 N. East St., Indianapolis, IN 46202 Phone: (317) 635-1661

Birthdate: October 5, 1923 Birthplace: Toledo, Ohio

Length of residence in Terre Haute: 1955-1980

Education: University of Pennsylvania, B.A.; Master of  
Architecture

Occupational history: Architect, life-long.  
U.S. Air Force, W.W. II

Special interests, activities, etc. Contemporary Art, canoeing,  
wilderness backpacking, camping, painting, pottery, reading,  
opera, ballet, travel. For additional information, see Terre Haute  
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Architecture in Terre Haute.

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## Interviewing sessions:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Interviewer</u>
04/13/81	8:00 A.M.	164 Allendale Place Terre Haute, IN 47802	Jane C. Hazledine

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EWING H. MILLER

Tape 1

April 13, 1981

At Hazledines' residence--164 Allendale Place, Terre Haute, IN

INTERVIEWER: Jane C. Hazledine

TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen M. Skelly

For: Vigo County Oral History Project

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JH: This is Monday, April 13. I'm Jane Hazledine and I'm interviewing Ewing Miller, architect-city planner.

Ewing, would you like to give us a definition of architecture?

MILLER: The way I look at architecture, Jane, it's as though you freeze a moment of time. It sounds very specific when you talk about buildings or the placement of buildings in an urban fabric. Howsoever, it really is all the forces . . . they reflect all of the forces that are on society at a given time -- the advancement of technology, how much money there is to spend (the economics); what is our attitude toward space; what's our attitude toward energy; the political involvement casts its shadow over the face of architecture. So it's a statement of society at a given point.

JH: All right. Now, part of our interest in this interview is in your recollections of your Uncle Warren Miller, who was an architect here for many years and one of the early architects in Terre Haute. Let's go back a little bit; because considering your definition here, we need then to define what Terre Haute was like.

When did Warren Miller start practicing here?

MILLER: Well, Warren started in 1910 to the records that I have and my memory of our conversations. We have a lot of architects in the family.

Matthew Miller was in Terre Haute before Warren. Matthew was a great uncle; he had an office in Buffalo, and he was sort of the fashion architect, I think. He came out from Buffalo and spent summers here. He did many of the fine homes along what was then the 5th and 6th Street corridors, you know.

JH: Yes.

MILLER: To me, his best-known building would be the Elks Building that was on 7th Street, almost at the corner of 7th and Cherry. It now belongs to Indiana State University.

MILLER: Now, I was never quite clear whether . . . I know that my Uncle Warren told me that he served as a construction superintendent on that job when he was in school. He would come back here in the summer times, and I don't know whether Warren took over the practice of Matthew or whether there was really . . . Matthew . . . that was his last piece of work and he was out of business then or he didn't come back and Warren started.

JH: Was Matthew Warren's father?

MILLER: No, no, he was an uncle.

JH: He was an uncle of Warren's?

MILLER: Yes. Yeah. Grandfather Miller, I believe, was in insurance and the early automobiles. He was a . . .

JH: But they did live in Terre Haute?

MILLER: They lived here in Terre Haute, yeah.

JH: All right. Now let's go on to Uncle Warren then.

MILLER: O.K. Now, Warren started in 1910; and he actually started in Brazil, Indiana, with a cousin by the name of Houston Johnson, who was an engineer. He was an M.I.T. graduate and had been crippled from polio. He was a wheelchair occupant.

My father then graduated from Pennsylvania in 1912 and went to Toledo, Ohio, to . . .

JH: Now, what was your father's name?

MILLER: His name was Ewing.

JH: His name was Ewing, also.

MILLER: He was Ewing H. as well.

JH: I see.

MILLER: And he went to Toledo, Ohio, to practice . . . not to practice but to get his early experience in a large office there, and that's where he met my mother. And then he went to service. He went to serve in the air force of World War I. And on his return, the two were married, and they came then to Terre Haute, and

MILLER: he became a partner, and it became Miller, Johnson and Miller. And that's when . . . I believe that's about the time they moved to Terre Haute. Brazil, Indiana, even in those days (laughs) wasn't quite large enough to keep an architect going full. So they moved to Terre Haute, and they had really a very successful practice here.

JH: Where did Uncle Warren go to school? Where was his education?

MILLER: They were both . . . Great Uncle Matt and Warren and my father were all University of Pennsylvania graduates.

JH: And you, too.

MILLER: As I. Um hm. Yeah.

Now, let's see. Their early practice was mostly in schools. The files are sort of full of these two and three-story Renaissance, neo-Renaissance (laughs) schools that became quite their trademark. There are a few left around here. I think that Warren Miller was more the business part of the firm, and my father was more the designer. Now this is of interest to the history, because in his class at the University of Pennsylvania one of his good friends was a man by the name of Ralph Yeager, whom my father enticed in coming to Terre Haute to work for them. And that will unfold as we go along.

JH: Would you like to identify some of these early schools? Can you recall where these are?

MILLER: Yes. I believe there's one up on Lafayette /Avenue/ and isn't that McLean school up there?

JH: I don't know.

MILLER: I can't . . . I just . . . I really don't remember the name.

JH: I don't know. The school corporation occupies a very large school that's on Lafayette.

MILLER: It seems to me that that's one of them that they did as sort of a normal school. But his finest piece

MILLER: of work in school design was Woodrow Wilson /Junior High/, and the . . . maybe the myth more than actuality but the myth in my uncle's mind was that he had finished that job the night that he died. He died very suddenly of a medical complication that could be treated today. It was a duodenal ulcer, I guesss. But they operated on him for appendicitis, as I understand, and that caused his death.

JH: Now, this was your father.

MILLER: This was my father. And . . .

JH: Did he die here in Terre Haute then?

MILLER: He died here in Terre Haute at Union Hospital.  
Um hm.

And then, very tragically, Mack Johnson died of a heart attack some three months later. So then Warren was left with a rather large office and a lot of work and without two partners. And this is when he asked Ralph Yeager if he would come in and be his partner.

JH: Can you give us a date on this?

MILLER: Well, this had to be 1923, because all of this happened in '23; and, of course, I was born in October of '23 so I never knew my father, Ewing. He had died just these few months before I was born. And my mother, of course, went back to her parents in Toledo, Ohio. That's the reason I was born not in Terre Haute but in Toledo and grew up there in the house of my grandparents. I would come to Terre Haute to spend summers with great frequency, particularly after the age of about 7 or 8. I think I spent almost all my summers here until my high school years, and then it wasn't quite so frequent. But I knew everybody in Terre Haute because of this. So, it was almost like having grown up here, you know -- even though I didn't go to my early school here.

JH: Well, was it at this point then that Warren Miller enticed Ralph Yeager to come to Terre Haute?

MILLER: Well, he was already here I believe. He was working . . . he came here because of my dad and, evidently, also was rather adept in the design field. And this is what Warren needed to continue the firm. And so . . . yes, he did ask him then to be a partner, and it became . . . for a long period of time while the

MILLER: jobs were running out, it became Miller, Johnson, Miller and Yeager. Then it finally merged over into being Miller and Yeager; and it stayed that way for many years because the Depression, of course, occurred in '29 and there was nothing built (laughing), I don't think, until the early '30s. One of their best jobs in that early '30 era, that I think, is the Federal Post Office, which is a delightful piece of art deco in a little sort of formalist style.

They did a lot of churches. I know one of the things that my father won an award for was the old Jewish temple. It's not used as a temple any longer. It's used as a . . .

JH: The B'nai Brith, it's now a senior citizens center.

MILLER: That's right. And he designed all of the windows in that as well. And I know that those windows have been taken out, and people own them here in town. As a matter of fact, I think we put . . . Hap (my wife who is also an architect and I suppose for the record, why she's Gladys J. Miller, who has, well, done many fine houses in this community from our period of arriving here in 1955 until we left in 1980). . . . She put one of these windows in one of the houses that she made an addition to for Drs. Weinbaum, Jack and Bobbie Weinbaum.

JH: Oh, yes. Yes.

MILLER: So many of these things intertwine in a small town where you. . . . I had the good fortune, I guess, of putting a link building on the ISU campus between the Elks building which had then been purchased by ISU and had been designed by great Uncle Matt and the Student Union Building that Warren Miller and Ralph Yeager had designed. And we connected those two with a building that serves as a gateway and lets people sort of funnel underneath.

JH: So, the town is replete with Miller, Miller, Yeager, Miller and whatever. (both laugh)

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: Now, during this . . . going back just a little bit, during this period of the '20s in addition to the Woodrow Wilson building, which, incidentally, is

- JH: about to be totally rehabilitated at a very extensive fee . . .
- MILLER: I hope it's being done with some sensitivity.
- JH: We hope so.
- MILLER: Yeah. Because it was such a good building that it lasted for many years through many changes in education philosophy.
- JH: As I recall, it was featured in one of the architectural record magazines as an outstanding piece. I remember seeing a picture of it many years ago.
- MILLER: I see. You know something about it that I didn't.
- JH: Well, in any event, I'd be interested in your identifying whatever buildings you might be able to recall of that period and why . . . we're interested in the development of style, the changes of style, and as you say, in relationship to the economy and the social structure of the time.
- MILLER: Well, as I look back through the photographs . . . and I suppose this is a thing I'll want to do eventually as my junior partners now take more command of the firm and I have a little more free time. I probably need to make sort of an anthology of pictures of the work that has been contributed by this family because we're really gone now, you know, in many ways.
- JH: This is true.
- MILLER: I know Rea Park, for example, was one of the things that my father did. We had a big water color rendering of this that hung in the firm for years.
- JH: Was that done as a private job for the William S. Rea grant or was this done for the city?
- MILLER: I think this was done for the city at that time, but it was probably paid for by the Rea grant although I don't know that so I shouldn't say that.
- JH: I see.
- MILLER: Much of the circumstances surrounding that early work is fairly hazy with me, and I would have to go back and try to check records.



MILLER: I would characterize the work of the firm as being quite sensitive to proportion. They did purely eclectic styles. They weren't experimenters. They weren't a follower, for example, of Frank Lloyd Wright, who was coming along at that time. Their work was based on the historic mode. I think they were rather fond of the colonial although they seemed to transfer back and forth as many architects did in that period. If they used the colonial primarily for houses and park shelters and things of that nature, they had no hesitancy about flipping over into Romanesque for most of the church work they did. And then schools became sort of, as I said, the neo-Renaissance adaptive style.

Then, I believe the forces of change really sort of blew in after my father had died and they . . . the Depression had just passed and the whole era of art deco came in, because they . . . Miller and Yeager also did the City Hall which is much in the same style as the federal building. And then if you'll take a look at the doors at the Swope Gallery, why they're just beautiful examples of that period.

Now, they had a young draftsman working for them at the time whose uncle had also been an architect in this town. This was Allison Vrydagh. And Allison Vrydagh's Uncle Jose may have been educated abroad.

JH: Was he from this area?

MILLER: He was from this area but whether he had been born here or whether he came here from Belgium (Vrydagh is a Belgian name, actually means "Friday")  
. . . .

JH: Oh, that's interesting.

MILLER: Yes, Vri-dock, I think it was pronounced in the Flemish.

And José Vrydagh did many of the very fine churches here. Now, I can't tell you which churches those are, but I would not be surprised that he didn't do the very nice Catholic church at the corner of about 8th or 9th and Ohio.

JH: St. Benedict's.

MILLER: St. Benedict's, yes. And . . . I think he did

MILLER: as a matter of fact. /Adolf Druiding, not Vrydagh, was the architect of St. Benedict's./

JH: Now, was he operating then, at that time, as an independent architect?

MILLER: Yes.

JH: Before the advent of the Millers?

MILLER: That's right. This was before the advent of at least the Warren Millers. He probably was a contemporary of Matthew Miller, in that period of time.

As I understand, my uncle told me once (this is Warren again) told me that when they started their business, which was more or less a continuation of Matthew's work, well, when they started in 1910, there were 14 firms in this town.

JH: Fourteen architectural firms!

MILLER: Now of these, probably 12 of them were branch offices of Chicago. This was quite a booming (laughs) little place.

JH: My goodness!

MILLER: . . . at that point, and because travel was expensive, why they would open a branch office down here and staff it with one of their senior members, and then they'd hire people here.

JH: Of course, this is before the days of magazine plans and all that kind of thing. Would that account in part for the . . .

MILLER: Well, I think that magazine plans probably existed in this country on houses from 1800 on, (laughs) practically, because I have seen books really of 1840 publications where architects would actually publish a book of plans, and they would be . . . you could order it for \$3 or \$4, you know. And they would have about 200 different plans, and then you'd pick out what you'd want, and then you'd send in for that number. So we've been . . . in the field of housing, we've been buying "off the rack," so to speak (laughs), for many, many years.

JH: What would support that many architects in Terre Haute at that time?

MILLER: Well, I think it was probably mostly commercial then. I think a lot of Wabash Avenue was still being developed and the area along 7th Street was then. The finer homes probably were all architect done. And architects did a very general practice because buildings weren't very complex by today's standards. What was the name of the building right at 7th and Cherry -- the tall, thin one that never had . . .

JH: Oh, the Rose Dispensary.

MILLER: The Rose Dispensary building. Now, that was, I think, an 1860, late 1850 building. It was a handsome building; and it was . . . technologically, it really reflected a state of the art of the day. It had cast iron columns, even though it had a wood frame in it, and one stairway. It was a terrible firetrap, but it was no worse than anything else being built at that time in terms of fire. But it was, oh, six stories, I believe, and the elevator must have come along at a later time. If it had an elevator in it, it was an early elevator that had been removed by the time I got to see it. But the shaft was there and the stairway wrapped around it. But the cast iron columns were very unique, and you didn't see very many of them in this town.

JH: It's too bad those old buildings had to be torn down because of their . . . well, fire hazard.

MILLER: Fire is one.

JH: Inability to support a building of that magnitude . . .

MILLER: Yeah. Well, it had . . . also the economies of the day said that you could have a much smaller floor area to the elevator space. In today's high cost of elevators you can't put it in just to rent 2,000 sq. ft. on one floor (laughs), you know. And you can't maintain it and now they're all automated.

So the economy of that kind of ratio has changed.

JH: Well then, too, this was the core of the medical practice, really.

MILLER: I suppose it was.

JH: It was a medical building, and I think at one time it was largely doctors and dentists who occupied it. It was all clustered together. Here again, it was available through transportation that came up into the city through the center of town.

MILLER: On both 7th Street and on down Wabash.

JH: Yes.

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: And down 7th Street, too. The streetcars and the interurbans and all those things came in, and that was the core of it.

Now would you like to develop for us these changes of style now?

MILLER: Well, in the 1930s although the office was very small and everybody (laughs) had left the community except Miller and Yeager because of the Depression . . .

JH: Well, what did they do during the Depression?

MILLER: Well, for the first three years, I understand, they sold insurance.

JH: Well, that's one way to keep alive.

MILLER: Yeah. And then things started to come back a little bit. Well, the things that kept architects going then are not available, and it's not really housing. It was remodelling of drugstores. You had an architect to do your grocery store. You had an architect to do your gas station. And it was a whole series of those little jobs that have since become "canned" as they've moved into the shopping center. A specialist lays out the way things are stored in a grocery store, so that you buy the most amount on your way out of those kind of impulse items you know . . . and the level of lighting. They have become really warehouses rather than groceries as we knew them, you know, where someone waited on you and packaged it up and carried it to your car. They're now warehouses of food.

The same with . . . the grocery store. Now, you will remember . . . was it Riggs? Was that the little drugstore at the corner of 8th and Wabash?

JH: No, Ranes drugstore was up on Locust Street.

MILLER: No, not Ranes, Riggs.

JH: Oh, Riggs. Yes, Carl Riggs. That's right.  
Eighth and Wabash.

MILLER: Carl Riggs, yeah. That was a nice art deco before it was torn apart to make room for something else. But that was a beautiful art deco drugstore done in Carrara marbles and a glass front which was very popular in those days you know.

JH: Do you know just when that was done? Sort of?

MILLER: Ummm. I would venture that it was just pre-World War II, probably.

JH: Yes.

MILLER: In the late '30s.

JH: But now that was all part of an old building that already was there. That was a remodelling of an area within the building.

MILLER: Well, I think remoddellings were a very large part of their work /plus/ an occasional governmental building like the Federal Building or the City Hall and a very occasional building on the Indiana State campus, which was then known as Indiana Normal, wasn't it?

JH: Well, the Normal . . . it was Normal School, then Indiana . . .

MILLER: I don't know when that changed.

JH: I can't . . . I should be able to . . . but I can't.

MILLER: It had become . . .

JH: It was the Normal school through the early '20s. I think by the mid- . . . by the '30s it was Indiana State . . .

MILLER: Well, it wasn't Indiana State College . . .

JH: . . . College.

MILLER: . . . until right after World War II. It became Indiana State College right after World War II. And probably just about the time that I came here. Now,

MILLER: I don't think it was called the Normal school. They had dropped that; it was just called Indiana State.

JH: It was called Indiana State . . . because I went to school there, and it was Indiana State.

MILLER: I think the "Normal" was dropped probably . . .

JH: Yes, that's correct.

MILLER: . . . in the late '20s, early '30s.

JH: Do you know what buildings they did there?

MILLER: Yes. Well, we had mentioned that one of their nicest building was the Student Union Building that was done in a sort of a simplified French provincial style.

They also did the dormitories and I'm . . .  
Reeve Hall, which was across the way.

JH: Reeve Hall was the first . . . this was the first dormitory.

MILLER: Yeah.

And then the next building they did was that . . .  
was also really a nice building, particularly from the exterior of . . . was the Fine Arts Building.

JH: Yes, over on Chestnut Street.

MILLER: Yeah. And it was interesting to go back and see all of the master planning that was being done. It was very formalist with big gardens and a long mall that would have really gone also across Chestnut Street, eventually, and gone on down.

JH: So, this was incorporated in the original concept?

MILLER: Yes, it was that. Yeah, yeah. It was a north-south access through there.

Now then, Ralph Yeager had . . . to continue a little bit with the history and intertwine it here in what was being done, the modern movement started to come in then; and they were experimenting with this in the late '30s, early '40s. During the war their major project was a large air base down around Vincennes, and that kept them busy. It was a training base,

MILLER: I believe, for twin-engine aircraft, and I've now forgotten the name of the field. It actually . . . it's across the river, and it serves as the commercial field still for the Vincennes area -- the Vincennes-Robinson area.

Needless to say, (laughing) there wasn't much going on in the civilian market at that point. And then right after World War II was finished, Ralph Yeager had one son, Ralph, Jr., who came back to the city. They decided . . . or evidently Ralph, Sr. decided that he and his son would set up their own business. It was during this period of time that Allison Vrydagh's work had shown so much promise that I know Warren very much wanted to bring him into the firm and brought him into the partnership. So, for a period of time then it became Miller, Yeager and Vrydagh. And then Yeager decided that he would pull out and form another firm with his son, the Yeager Architects.

Then there was a second son, Peter. I believe he went to Yale initially and graduated either in . . . well, probably with a liberal arts degree. Let's put it that way. And then I think he went back to Illinois [University] to study. He worked in the State Department for a while, and then he went back to Illinois to study architecture.

JH: Well now, was Ralph, Jr. educated at Illinois?

MILLER: Ralph, Jr. was educated at Illinois, too, I believe.

JH: Yes, I kind of thought he was.

MILLER: Yeah.

And . . . now before Pete joined the firm, he came back about the time that I came here. Peter came back.

JH: Yes. And that was 1955?

MILLER: 'Fifty-five, yeah.

Well, to trail me in this period of time, I decided that I would go to study architecture and see whether this fit me; and I entered school in 1941. Well, by 1942 the bugles were sounding, and we all left for service in that period of '42-'43. I served

MILLER: out my service and was discharged in 1945. And the thing that was important to my career later on . . . . I'd been on . . . in service I became a military pilot and was a combat pilot and flew everything from A20's to B-24's.

I then went back to school . . .

JH: To the University of Pennsylvania.

MILLER: To the University of Pennsylvania and graduated from there in '48, taking my master's in '49. Hap Miller, who was then Happy Good (chuckles) by nickname, graduated also in '49 with her bachelor's. And we were married then and settled in Philadelphia. I worked for several firms there. One very large one that was an old-line practitioner. As a matter of fact, the man who founded it, Paul Cret, had been my father's professor; and in my freshman year I had had Paul Cret as well. He was . . . oh, dear, this becomes very complex at this point because he not only had been taken ill but he was a very elderly man, and he came to the school on a few occasions. There is now recognition that he was probably . . . latently, there is recognition that he was one of the great architects in this country. And there are quite a few books being written now about his "bridging" style between the eclectic or the historical style and into the art deco. He did a number of things, by the way, in Indianapolis that I'm finding -- the Heron School of Art and a number of those buildings. A very deft hand. He was a contemporary and worked much in the same way as the elder Saarinen and had a . . . did some very fine things. /He/ did quite a bit of the work in that period in Washington, D.C., which reflects that very sort of formalist stuff, U.S. government style, that was prevalent in those days.

JH: So, he became your mentor in a sense?

MILLER: Well, he was the mentor for several generations of family in that way.

Anyway I went to work for that firm, and that was a very large firm, and I did lettering ad infinitum as my (breaks into laughter) . . .

JH: (joining in laughter) As the low man on the totem pole?

MILLER: Low man on the totem pole. I got to arrange



MILLER: Roman letters for all these monuments we were doing (laughing) in Washington; and then I complained about that and I think they transferred me to stairs. And I did stairs for six months (laughs). This was all good training (continuing to laugh), but it's what young people have to go through.

I then went with a smaller firm and thought that . . . I practiced with them for a year and got more into the design, as you would in a small firm, and a much greater variety of work.

I came to Terre Haute the first time really in 1953. It was right at the beginning of the Korean War and [I] wanted to try this for a minute . . . or for a . . . not a minute, for a year to see whether I would like the community. And it was before all of the activity started around . . . Indiana State really was not doing anything right then.

Now, as fate would have it, Ralph Yeager and his son, Ralph, Jr., had now established their own practice when I came here. So that must have been . . . come to think of it, that must have been right about '52 or '53 when they did this. Because it seems to me I came here right when they were doing this.

JH: So you filled a needed gap in your uncle's firm?

MILLER: That's right. I was sort of the young man in the firm then that came in. And the Yeagers, having been good friends over the years, why we . . . I would visit with them and talk about Terre Haute and the sort of friendly competition we were going to have.

Well, as fate would have it, friends of mine that I had left back in school went to work for a very large firm in Philadelphia, and they were all sent to England to work on U.S. air bases there because this was the buildup of the cold war. And I had been in correspondence with them [and had] said that I thought that they were very fortunate to be able to see so much of history that we had all studied and at somebody else's expense really. Because you know travel wasn't that . . . it was still one of the things that the very wealthy did or the very adventurous like the Haliburtons (laughs), but it wasn't the thing that everybody did quite so much. We did travel around our country, I think, in automobiles

MILLER: from the time that you and I were both young, but not as many people thought about going abroad. I think your family was one of the few that did this, really.

JH: So, you hankered for the . . .

MILLER: So, I hankered for this, yeah. And . . . but the thing that was the clincher was that my master's work was really in planning. I was one of the very few that had spent a master's degree in what was then the very beginning sort of science-art of urban planning. And I had a telegram from a man by the name of Erman Mitchell that I had been a very close friend of both he and his wife. And he said, "If you can be in England (laughs) in four weeks, why we have 20 some odd air bases that have to be planned and you're the only one I know that can actually fly with the pilots and determine the characteristics of what was then the evolving jet aircraft."

JH: Aaaah! So it tied up with your experience in the air . . .

MILLER: So it tied up with the experience of having been a military pilot and still being relatively young and not out of the service that long. And these were cities really of five to fifteen thousand people. What was known as a SAC base (Strategic Air Command base) was 15,000 people. And it had to have schools and hospitals and industry and housing, because the English economy couldn't support this influx of Americans.

JH: Now, these bases were planned under the Strategic Air Command then?

MILLER: That's right.

JH: Who paid for this?

MILLER: Oh, the Americans did. It was a combined force of the British Air Ministry and the American Air Force -- which was a separate branch of the service by then -- that planned and executed them. But the Americans paid for them. Britain was really strapped at that point.

JH: So you were working for SAC at that point?

MILLER: That's right.

MILLER: We had an interesting office made up of sort of key Americans in command, so to speak. And then all of our secondary people, right down through draftsmen, were all British. So we had a marvelous experience. And that's where I met David Field, and then he'll come into the picture a little bit later.

JH: How long did you stay in England then?

MILLER: Well, totally we stayed there about three years. In that period of time, two of it was working. Then Hap and I just decided to take every penny we had and spend almost a year touring the continent from all down into southern Italy, where I had flown out of, and back into Germany -- which I did with great trepidation because of having been their prisoner for a while -- and 'way up into the Scandinavian countries, which were the leaders of architecture at that time. Sweden and Denmark and the social philosophy was reflected in their architecture. It was . . . they were the great designers of that period. The thin birch furniture, the very sparse, minimalist kind of architecture that they had developed and made so popular in the magazines. The Scandinavian look really was . . .

JH: Do you think your travel in Europe at that time had a great influence on your subsequent thinking about architecture and design?

MILLER: Oh, it couldn't help not to, Jane. The world was a very exciting place then. It really was. You know we . . . although I flew to England, by far the cheapest way of going was still going by boat. So that gives you an idea about what transportation rates were. I flew in a 4-engine Lockheed aircraft that in 1954, or 1953, they still announced the point of no return, you know (laughs). And we stopped . . . we left New York . . . or I guess I left out of Philadelphia really. And we stopped in Gander in all this incredible amount of snow (continues to laugh). And we took off and they finally said, "Well, we're at the point of no return. We now must go on," you know. And of course, you flew at very low altitudes which meant you were buffeted by all the north Atlantic storms, and we landed in Shannon for breakfast. Oh, God, it was tedious. It was 18 hours, you know, that people put up with.

Now, when Hap came over to join me, why she came by boat. And we came home by boat.

MILLER: So, the world was smaller in that way, and it was . . . and by that, I don't mean smaller in time-distance -- that it makes the world smaller today. But the countries were much more parochial. They were much more protective. The whole concept of the international style was just beginning so you'd find a bit of it in Italy, and we'd search it out, you know. There was one firm in Rome that was doing great contemporary work, and we . . . . And surprisingly, there were two Americans that had started but then had Italian partners, and we went and visited them. And it was a heady period of time in which we thought that architecture was really going to set free the true democracy, the true forces of mankind into this brave new world. We really did.

And when you got to Sweden and saw what was being done and how clean the cities were and how good the transportation was and how everybody was really taken care of and provided for, it did look like Utopia. It was a lovely period of time to be alive, I thought.

JH: But you came then back to Terre Haute.

MILLER: That's true.

JH: When?

MILLER: Well, we came back here . . . for all practical purposes, we could say January, 1955. I think it was really December of '54. Or November (laughs) or sometime around in there.

JH: Yes, I really believe it was. It was November of '54.

MILLER: But, you know, in that year that we were here where we saw so little hope for the town, we made a lot of friends. And one of the people that influenced . . . . We made these through Community Theater really -- where we first met you and Kenny and worked so hard on getting the thing transferred with Weldin into new quarters. But one of the people we met then was George Mayrose. And Bob Wiandt. And they had stayed because Bob Wiandt particularly, the jeweler, was such an anglophile that he wrote to us continually and we wrote back. I think it was George that wrote and said, "Well, you ought to come back and try it one more time because Indiana State's beginning to grow, and we really think

MILLER: that the university is going to expand considerably from what all of the people are talking about."

JH: Well now what did Uncle Warren and . . . was Allison Vrydagh then in the firm, too? It was Miller and Vrydagh, wasn't it?

MILLER: Um hm. Well, about that time, as coincidence again so seems to happen in life, Ralph Yeager had been doing the work at Indiana State. When the firm split up, I think that that's the area that he developed and that was his contact under Ralph Tirey, the president of the university at that time. And Ralph Yeager . . . and I want to make a few comments about this. Ralph Yeager did two buildings there: a classroom building -- and this was along 6th Street -- and an administration building. People want to go by and look at those. They haven't changed very much.

JH: Now, this is Dreiser Hall.

MILLER: (hesitates) I guess it is.

JH: Yes.

MILLER: Yeah. I guess it is.

The two buildings are separated by a large flight of steps and they're connected together . . . . I would say that probably Yeager was following more the contemporary design line than Miller and Vrydagh were doing at that time. Allison Vrydagh had become more the designer in the firm, although in a small partnership both partners really work on a building. But I think Allison sort of took the lead, and I think he was a little less comfortable with the very modern kind of things that were just coming out after World War II.

Ralph, Jr. was back out of the University of Illinois where he had been trained in this, and so they launched into what was Terre Haute's sort of first beginnings with a really contemporary or moderne statement. "Modern" with an "e" on the end of it, statement -- the use of glass block.

We were under the influence then . . . quite a bit was being done in South America and Italy, and I think these two buildings sort of reflect it. They have a certain starkness to them. To some people they still had a reflection of being what had been deroga-

MILLER: torily termed "Mussolini modern." They were too . . .

END OF SIDE 1

TAPE -SIDE 2

MILLER: Well, it had been said sometimes that this was derogatorily termed the period of Mussolini modern. I don't think it had that kind of formality, and it certainly wasn't heavy-handed in the use of columns. But it had a number of little quirks about it such as the use of the concrete block and the little small porte-cocheres that came out. A very thin concrete, you know, with a single column, particularly, was a sort of a trademark of the new technology of the day. It also reflected the economics in the sense that we were really skinning the ornament off buildings and had been doing so more and more. The art deco was a very heavily ornamented period, and the nice thing about the art deco work of both the Federal Building and the Sheldon Swope Gallery is that a lot of that was original. It was done from drawings that the architect did. And it was one of a kind. Well, we were really beginning to lose that capability in the economics of our . . . . Then, they wanted sort of a fresh new look for what was the emerging Indiana State. Now, as architects are subject to politics, why then the Miller-Vrydagh firm was assigned a building with the advent of Dr. Holmstedt as the president, and a sort of a switch or change occurred.

JH: Do you think this was a matter of making it equitable in a sense that Yeager had been doing so therefore . . .

MILLER: I think that is true. I think that all universities sort of spread things around in more normal kind of times, you know.

JH: I think, maybe, I also would like to ask if it were necessary on the part of the architect to solicit work? Did you go out and sell your product in a sense?

MILLER: Well, you asked for an interview, and you appeared before the Board or you talked to your friends on the Board, if you wanted to be in that position. And I'm sure that Warren did this. I wasn't quite sure what got the job for him. It was a home economics building.

MILLER: And so I received a plea letter in England. I had just returned . . . we had just returned from our big trip. I received this letter that said that he and Allison would welcome me in the partnership if I would come back because this work was beginning. And as I was prone to be more toward the design end than the business end, why, they felt that they needed somebody that had been trained in the moderne movement. Following World War II, why, the beaux arts system, which most architects had been trained in for generations (laughs), was sort of overthrown by what was now the Mies Van der Rohe which had come to this country from the Bauhaus and had had great influence. Frank Lloyd Wright had had great influence. There were a raft of others that are less well known to the lay public. The Marcel Breuers of Harvard and the José Serts, also of Harvard.

And then at the University of Pennsylvania when I went to school, why, there was an unknown man there at that time by the name of Louis Kahn. And Lou Kahn would . . . because the University of Pennsylvania really used practicing architects to teach architecture, which is the best system in my way of thinking, why, Lou Kahn would come frequently to be a critic and judge. Of course, he has gone; but in his late years he was finally recognized as one of the great American geniuses in the contemporary movement. And this was after I was out of school and beyond.

JH: Well, given this Home Economics building then, did you have pretty much free rein in this . . .

MILLER: Um hmm.

JH: . . . or were you constrained by . . .

MILLER: Very much free rein. And, of course, I was back from having seen all of the things in Scandinavia and England, and it reflects that very much. Those things were of great influence, particularly the large glass window of the staircase. It also reflects (commences to laugh) a disdain for the cost of energy, because we just had no problems with it then. If you'll look at that staircase with its single light sort of hanging in it, why, that's a crib from much of what the

MILLER: Scandinavians had been doing. And it was an experimental thing, technologically, really, because it was one of the first panel wall installations in this community, if not in Indiana.

JH: Now, what do you mean by this?

MILLER: Well, this was the wall to the north /that/ is of a blue metal porcelain, and glass which is inserted in an aluminum frame and was put up in sections; so it was a technologically devised way of providing a "skin." And the theory behind that building was that it was to be . . . it was an open-ended building. It could move off its ends in either direction to be expanded. As it turned out, that particular subject matter has not been one of the ones that grew in the University as it had previously, and so there has been no need to expand that building. But it could have been continued either on west or it could have been continued on south in the low wing. The proportions were . . . it was really one of the first, I suppose, international style of buildings that was done in the community. Its proportion of height of the two-story to the single-story wing is quite much what Saarinen was doing at Cranbrook at that time, except that he used the pitched roof systems up there. It had good scale. Tilt, you know.

JH: Yes. I think we need to know whether Indiana State had a sort of long-range grand plan or was there any opportunity to try to determine what other buildings might be in the area and make an overall plan?

MILLER: Aah, dear. Well, we had the plan you know, as I told you, from the late 1920s and I don't know who paid for that plan. It seems to me that in the '20s or the '30s Warren did two such major plans for this community. One was Wabash Avenue, and the National Road was seen going straight through and all the buildings were to be torn down on either side of Wabash Avenue and two what we call frontage roads put in on each side for local traffic. And this was to be tree-lined and was an elysée, you know. It was really handsome.

JH: Was this to be a mall type?

MILLER: This was a, well, it was . . . in the sense that the National Road would go through not as a boulevard, separated, but as a major street, and then there were these big planting spaces of trees and sidewalks and street furniture. Then there was another road with



MILLER: parking off of it, angled parking.

JH: So you wouldn't park on the National Road at all?

MILLER: So you wouldn't have parked on the National Road, and these were called the frontage roads, and then there was an arcade that you walked under, and then the buildings would have been behind that. Well, by this time the buildings . . . the back of the buildings would have been clear over on Ohio. You'd have just used up one-half of that city block.

Well, of course, it was a grand dream but it just never had any root of practicality. It was a very formalist statement. Oh, we would have had a Barcelona (laughs).

JH: (joins in laughter) It would have cost millions.

MILLER: Yeah, it would have cost millions in those days, but the arcades would have really given the town such character that it probably wouldn't have changed because the concept was one of almost protecting people as they walked along from this kind of inclement weather.

The other thing he did was the thing for Indiana State which sort of came up in the butt of the town on Cherry Street. And that formal plan ran therefore north and south on its axis. By the time that I was then working with Dr. Holmstedt on this first building, there was no plan. Everything had been abandoned, and they were just really buying property wherever property was available. That was . . .

JH: Well, did you however secretly kind of keep this plan in mind at the time that you were first working there?

MILLER: No. We really didn't. There was just no feeling that that could be accomplished. Kenny Moulton was the vice-president . . . or wasn't vice-president then but was treasurer, and he felt that the best use of state money was to buy distressed property when it came up. And, of course, Indiana State by this point in time was surrounded by distressed property. It was really a . . . those buildings had deteriorated to the point that it was just . . . people . . . I don't think anybody could believe today the kind of impoverished living conditions that existed around that university.

JH: Yes, they were substandard . . .

MILLER: . . . in those early days.

JH: . . . rooming houses. They became really quite . . .

MILLER: Paid by the day as I remember. There were little tin boxes on the wall, and it really attracted a fairly low-life crowd along with the students. It wasn't a very healthy place.

The land west of 6th Street became available most quickly, really; and so that's where the big, new dormitories then started. And it wasn't too bad because there was room left in the main quadrangle to expand some buildings; and as we realized that the dorms were going to lie to the west of the campus, a plan did start to evolve where we thought that we would like to see the educational units confined between 6th and 7th and extending on across Chestnut Street. But the idea of the grand mall was out because Chestnut Street was terribly important in those days. There was a lot of industry up Chestnut Street that used Chestnut as the way of getting into the city. And . . .

JH: Of course, this is still under contention now.

MILLER: Yeah, that's true. Yeah.

JH: Chestnut Street is really the bone of contention in trying to solidify the campus.

MILLER: Now, about this time, Raleigh Holmstedt, the president, hired a firm of planners to come in. I think that it was the Brademas firm out of Mishawaka. And they did a master plan which showed Chestnut Street stopping at 7th Street and going into a very large curved street to the north and finally tying up with 3rd Street. But the curve would be such that it would give Indiana State a lot more land that they could put together, and they could get the traffic out of the middle of the campus. Well, that didn't work.

Then there was a scheme done, possibly by a group out of Michigan, that showed Chestnut Street being lowered so that cars could go underneath it and the pedestrian way would go across it at a given level. Well, that wouldn't work because there are so many utilities under there, it would have taken millions.

MILLER: And if there's one thing the state legislatures and cities hate to do is that they hate to put money into -- particularly in Indiana it seems -- they hate to put money into things that really don't show.  
(laughs)

JH: (laughs)

MILLER: Particularly once they're there! You know.

JH: The underground.

MILLER: The underground.

So, in a sense we've just sort of . . . there was a plan of keeping . . . Then I did a plan for them. And we were toying with the idea of trying to take walkways up and over, but you would then have had to fence the campus so that it would look like Buchenwald, you know. (laughs) You'd have to put high fencing and barbed wire practically around because people just won't do . . . they won't walk up steps to go across a traffic area and walk down. So no solution has ever come about that has really relieved that problem. And, I must admit -- I suppose it's because the kids are young and agile -- they haven't lost very many (laughs) in that traffic. And then traffic has diminished over the years that have intervened, so it is really sort of less of a problem today than it was when we were designing. But we did keep . . . the plan that I devised did keep all of the academics along a line that ran on this north-south axis. The new science building was an extension of the campus, and then the firm of Weber and Curry did a classroom building just to the east of the new science building.

JH: And that's Holmstedt Hall.

MILLER: That's Holmstedt Hall.

JH: Did you do the science building?

MILLER: I did the science building. I did the bookstore.

JH: Yes. That came in . . .

MILLER: And the bookstore was a nice . . . that was a little different building, too, because we hired a sculptor, a thing you probably couldn't do again today (laughs). This was John Laska. We hired him to do a brick panel for us, and we then took this

MILLER: sculpted panel over to the Terre Haute Brick plant. And we had them make that panel in repetitive things; and if you'll look at the side of that building, why, you have quite a nice bas relief of art that is really incorporated into the building -- a thing that had not been done much in contemporary architecture. The arts have always been applied. They've been applied as a piece of sculpturing thought out afterwards. "Let's put a piece of sculpturing in front of the building," you know.

JH: Yes.

MILLER: Or they have art work hung on the inside, but it's the Renaissance concept of art work being incorporated directly into the building. It's something that we . . .

JH: So, [It is] an integral part of the piece?

MILLER: Yeah, an integral part of the piece was lost. And that was a thing that was . . . that I think was quite experimental, really.

JH: Well, Laska also has a sculpture in front of the science building.

MILLER: Yeah, and that was applied. That came along afterwards.

JH: Yes.

What time are we talking about? What is the date now?

MILLER: Well, O.K. We're talking about . . . the home economics building was probably done in '57. Built. It was designed as soon as I came back here in '55, but it was built around '56, '57.

Then the bookstore came along afterwards. The science building about the early '60s. In the science building we also did another thing which isn't present any more. We used a lot of . . . in the way the Museum of Modern Art did, we used some very good glass block walls along there. But they really proved in the long run to be impractical; and when we remodelled, why, many of these were removed not only because of the thermal buildup that was so strong in those blocks, but . . . and we were just getting into vandalism.

Well, the advent of vandalism is a social pheno-

MILLER: mena that affects architecture. We found that people were shooting these out, believe it or not, you know. They became a great target for everything from BBs to 22s. And so . . . I'm sort of getting ahead of my story in many ways; but when the campuses erupted in the late '60s, the rocks that we had placed around so many of these buildings to curtail maintenance, which was another economic measure . . . . You can't get buildings and grounds people and you can't get competent people so you turn to other forms of landscaping to reduce the continuing cost of maintenance. Then you find these rocks being used (laughs) to knock out your windows, and we had to take all the big rocks out and put in little pea gravel that couldn't be thrown with any force. These things really affect design, and they affect the look of space. It's a much different space if it has tanbark than if it has big cobbles, you know.

JH: I think the lay person doesn't really appreciate the reason for all of these changes.

MILLER: Oh, I'll say, I'll say. Brought to their attention, they do, but they just don't think about it like we all don't think in somebody else's field oftentimes.

JH: Well, now carrying on from there, let's hear more about the individual buildings and what the progression of . . .

MILLER: All right. I think that probably Indiana State has one of the nicest collections of residence halls. It also has a thing that some people see as being very good and some see as being bad. This is a point of view. Much of Indiana State really came about in that period between 1957 and 1970. It overwhelmed what had been there before. There was a building coming on line every year, you know. And so it has a homogeneity of style even though the Yeagers did, I think, two of the initial dormitories and Weber and Curry did the little, low Holmstedt Hall kind of thing. And they're . . . both of those are . . . well, I shouldn't say both. The Holmstedt Hall is more of a generic form. It's more organic and it has more sort of . . . it's not as pure a style. It has more little idiosyncracies into it of the designers thing. I don't think either Wayne Weber or John Curry were the purists or the historians that we were, and I don't think that they had quite the grace that the Yeager dormitory had in that

MILLER: sense. Now, that's a personal opinion. But nevertheless, they were all done at one period of time when the technology, the economics, and the thought give them some sort of a unity. So that campus has really -- with the exception of that little old main part (laughs) of the campus, you know, of Reeve Hall and things like that -- is very much from one period. And it's going to reflect that forevermore because the growth of that college is over.

Now, some people feel . . . the counterargument to that is that it is too much the same, and it should have had more variety. But you can argue that ad infinitum.

I happen to think that it's going to be appreciated in 50 years as a fairly great grouping of buildings.

JH: Well, it seems to work, too.

MILLER: Yeah, it works. Yeah.

JH: Plus the fact that within the constraints of being tucked in the middle of the town, it had to work so far as the rest of the town was concerned.

What was the relationship of the town and the university at this point?

MILLER: Well, when I first came here . . . of course, this was sort of the golden duck. Now, Terre Haute evidently had two golden ages; one when it was first built. And it was built very rapidly. And although the fronts are now sort of nostalgic along -- what's left of them (laughs) -- on Wabash Avenue, why they were fairly well jerry-built. They weren't done as well as, say, Indianapolis buildings of the same era. With a few exceptions . . . and unfortunately the few exceptions were the ones that were torn down first -- like the opera house and things like that. That was a real shame when that went. We have saved a couple of the better buildings, I think; and hopefully, we can still save the Terre Haute House.

Anyway, it was a cheek-by-jowl relationship. And it was a great boon for the downtown because it brought two sets of congestions together, you know, and gave it a much better urban sense. And the kids brought a . . . the increasing enrollment brought a purchasing power there. There were several things that didn't happen which I think should have happened.

MILLER: There should have been land set aside and some way of providing for faculty housing. The era, howsoever, spawned in faculty [the feeling] that they wanted to sort of live in the suburbs like the rest of mankind. They liked to be able to leave the campus at 3 o'clock and not have people knocking on their door, which is the thing we all have in our mind of the "Goodbye, Mr. Chips" who was available (laughing) at any hour of the day or night for student problems in a friendly way, you know. (continuing to laugh) And all faculty aren't made up that way! And it was certainly the heyday of people in my age moving into the university system. It was ever expanding and people changed jobs with great frequency and therefore they wanted houses that could sell quickly, you know. We were a very mobile and moving society, and it reflected itself in the university world. So that never came about, and it didn't give that kind of stability to the north side that fortunately did remain on the south side. At least Terre Haute didn't tear down a lot of its good houses along South 6th and South Center.

JH: However, don't you think perhaps the existence of the railroads on the north edge of the campus rather determined to some extent what was happening up there?

MILLER: Well, it did. It most certainly did, and the abandonment of the Pennsylvania tracks was the thing that really did help ISU expand in that north direction. The combining of those tracks was the very eventful thing that we all worked very hard on.

JH: All right. Now. Let's have the buildings in their . . .

MILLER: O.K. (laughs) It's complex, isn't it? It's a very complex thing to try and discuss as a whole.

The science building was a very functional, very straightforward statement. It had a couple of things to it which are important in a technological way. We weren't so concerned with energy, but we were concerned about making classrooms very habitable for a very different form of education that was coming along. This was audiovisual, which is heavy in the life sciences. And so the east side of that building has a solar controlled shading system that would close down when the sun came out so that you didn't get all of that heat and glare into the classroom. [It] then could be

MILLER: overridden by a manual control and /the rooms/ could be closed down and used for audiovisual education. And it was a very functional building in the sense that the laboratories are arranged along a corridor of mechanical services that runs right through the heart of that building.

Now, here's a major change. And I notice this particularly going through some of my father's schools where they used aspirating systems to change the air. These were just nothing more than big flues, chimneys that would suck the air out of the room and the radiator would put it (laughing) back in, you know. So by this time we are getting in the need, because of air pollution, the very complicated thing of filtering all of that air and air-conditioning it. Because many of these laboratories, particularly, were inside and without windows and because of the controlled conditions they needed. So the expense of a building of that nature is now 50% in the mechanical systems where it used to be 10%. I don't know an architect in the early days that had to hire an engineer to put in the radiators and the aspirators. But now the mechanical engineer has become terribly important to a building because of air conditioning and filtration and air changes. Not only that, getting to the equipment becomes entirely . . . and so it shapes the floor plan of the building. And when we get these large, square or rectangular buildings, it's because of the distribution, oftentimes, of the mechanical equipment.

The other thing that's changing the shape of planning . . . and a building really starts first with function and then with the structure that goes on it. And those things get expressed in that building form in some way or another. When you get these channels -- which people can easily get to get to this very complex system -- why it makes this rigid plan. But the other reason is that the subject matter now is changing so quickly in the university that they have to be able to expand or contract rooms almost on an annual basis. So all of those rooms are subdivided in this larger structural frame with knockout walls, and they could . . . if the life sciences become dominant in a period, they can knock out a wall and have a classroom for 80 instead of 30, you see.

JH: Now, there has been some criticism of these highly mechanical ventilating systems and so on because of the possibility of breakdown. Is there any way of



JH: resolving this? Some of these buildings don't have windows that open.

MILLER: That's right. And that's one building that didn't. We recognized that, and what happens there is that the air is brought in and filtered in one set of fans and filters. Now, these very seldom break down. But at that point it's then distributed to individual units that serve each room individually. And so if one room breaks down, the rest of them don't. But that's why you have to be able to get to it, because you've got a hundred different units that can possibly (laughs) break down instead of one that knocks the whole building out.

Now, there was another reason for that. Many of those organic chemistry rooms and things like that have to have 100% fresh air into them. They can't recirculate.

JH: You have noxious fumes.

MILLER: You have noxious fumes or odiferous, if nothing more.

JH: That's true, too.

Well, now let me ask you this. Since we are now so very energy conscious, has there been a reflex of having windows that open, now?

MILLER: There is a return to that. Not much though. Windows that open, except in residences, are not great energy savers; and they sometimes really throw the whole mechanical system off. If somebody says, "Oh, boy, I want some fresh air," and he opens his window, he creates a negative pressure into that room. It just throws the entire building off. I think what we're looking at instead is do we really need as much fresh air into a room as we say? Our whole concept of the transfer of viruses and infections, particularly respiratory infections, had changed quite a bit. And we don't think that by putting in fresh air that we necessarily control those things at all.

JH: So you really need more of a filtering system?

MILLER: Well, you may need more of a filtering system or you may not be able to do anything about it except wear a gauze over your nose (laughs) if the truth be

MILLER: known. So, we can really cut down quite a bit of energy if we only supply enough fresh air to take off the body odors and excess heat. And we're genuinely confused, I think, still, about how we're going to save energy in the concepts of our buildings. We haven't worked that out. It's an evolving science. And it, too, will shape the whole next generation of buildings that are coming along, but it hasn't shaped anything drastically yet, except for solar panels on a few experimental buildings, really. That's about all that's been done.

JH: Let's go back to Indiana State.

MILLER: O.K. I was going on to the next phase of buildings just right quickly because one of the best technological buildings there that really puts its form is the old men's arena. Not the new one which is quite conventional. That one . . . the new one . . . and I guess that's called an arena, too, isn't it? That's the Hulman arena.

JH: Well, the Civic University Center, yes.

MILLER: That was done by the firm of Ferguth and Parcel. But the one that we did with the folded plate roof still stands as one of the great technological achievements of that era -- one of the longest folded plate spans in the world.

JH: Well, now tell us what this means?

MILLER: Well, this is taking a very plastic material like concrete; and by folding it like a piece of paper, you create strength in it. Then you run your wires through it, your reinforcing rods; and then after the concrete was set, why, then we put a power tool on one end of this reinforcing rod which was anchored at the other end, and we pulled on that rod, and we stretched it (these were big cables really). And we stretched those cables so much that it put a little arc in that roof of concrete.

JH: And these are those little arches on the roof?

MILLER: Yeah. That's the arch on the roof. Then we were able to span, I think, 265 feet in the clear with using only 6 inches of concrete, you see. And running these cables through and then drawing them up tight, that's known as a camber. And that camber then resists the load of snow or somebody walking on

MILLER: it or the dead weight of the material.

JH: Has this proven out?

MILLER: Oh, it's been a marvelous roof for that thing. You just don't have anything impeding your way. You don't have a column in there, you know. Now, it did one very good thing, I thought, but one very bad thing for the basketball (laughs) coach. We fluffed the underside of this with what was then permitted which was an asbestos fluff. And it is so good acoustically that you don't get that fervor of a roar. And, of course, that cut down on the excitement of the game. (laughs heartily)

JH: Oh, my goodness.

MILLER: But to me it was great because you could hear any place in that -- one man giving instructions to a whole gymnasium class, you know.

JH: So academically it was great.

MILLER: Yes. Yeah. But responsively to spectator sports (laughs), why it wasn't that good, I guess.

JH: This is the building at the corner of Chestnut and 5th Street.

MILLER: Yes. It's now the men's physical education area.

Let's just mention briefly in passing before we get off Indiana State, too, that probably some of the best buildings were the dormitories. They are not only . . . the students at that time and the faculty and the board of trustees, particularly, wanted a form that would really bring attention to this school of the Wabash Valley; so that's why we went to the high-rise.

We would not have needed to go to that exactly if . . . it did put a lot more students in the land available. That's true. Howsoever, if the truth be known, we probably could have done more low-rise kinds of things. It was the beginning of my cooperation with the behavioral psychologists to try and determine how kids really responded to the buildings they were in. And this was both good and bad. We got a lot of

MILLER: good feedback from our questionnaires, and we found out what colors they liked in their rooms, and we found out some very good things such as don't design in a person's room. Give him as much freedom to arrange that room as possible or as much freedom . . . . If we could have, by logistics, allowed every student to paint his room every year -- to choose his own color -- that would have been the most desirable.

So much was being done at that time where everything was designed and riveted to the floor that you couldn't change anything, and students really didn't like that and rebelled against it. And consequently, there was a lot of vandalism because of that.

Our dormitories worked very well. Our residence halls worked very well for that generation that helped decide them. We began to pick up in our form a minority of discontent so that by the time . . . . The Sycamore Towers were first. And then we put the additions on the Yeager buildings of Hines and Jones. Then we came over and did the real blockbusters /which/ were Statesmen's Towers. They're strongly architectonic and in the sense that they do express the structure and they express the plasticity of the pre-cast concrete, these are technologically very innovative buildings in the sense that they had a core -- a slipped core -- of poured concrete that took all of the stresses of that building. And then the floors and the walls were all pre-cast and were made in a factory and brought here and erected quickly and welded together and tied with a belt around each floor. And so they were very innovative that way. But I think that they're handsomely expressive of an era.

JH: I believe you received awards for these buildings.

MILLER: We did. We received, oh, a number of major design awards for these buildings.

The Sycamore Towers were originally designed to be a women's quadrangle. And we tried to make the exterior of that building in softer and more flowing plasticities to express that.

Statesmen's Towers was to be men. Now, what was occurring at that point was this rebellion of the '60s again where they didn't want to be split up. So, we now have men and women in both; and that philosophy behind the development of the exterior is gone. Maybe

MILLER: it was a little fatuous but it produced two . . . .  
Somehow you've got to have a vision in architecture  
to really get something that reads with an appeal,  
you know, so that when you look at that building,  
there's a certain spirit that goes along with it.  
So it has to come from sort of a single-point vision  
whether that vision carries true into its totality  
or not.

JH: So that a building is supposed to say, in a  
sense, to anyone sort of what it is . . . what it's  
for.

MILLER: That's true. What it's for. I think . . . and  
I think that's very difficult to do because some peo-  
ple could look at those and say, "Well, gee, those  
are office buildings," you know, because they're  
high-rise instead of low-rise. And I think in much  
of our contemporary space that becomes increasingly  
hard to define that, and I don't know as we're doing  
any better today in the post-moderne movement. But  
I think it does have to have at least a spirit to it  
that transcends the sort of the mundane box with a  
series of holes.

JH: Yes.

MILLER: And the spirit comes from a way of looking at  
that building so that it tells you something about  
itself. It tells you something about why it was  
planned the way it was. It tells you something about  
the use of materials. And we could only do that in  
pre-cast concrete. You could only do that very soft  
plasticity, that modeling. You couldn't do that in  
brick, if you were to do the whole thing, you know.

JH: Well, this then, is part of the reason why archi-  
tecture of buildings has changed so much because of  
the improved technology in these years.

MILLER: Technology and it's the fact that the economy  
said that you had to get more kids in less space.

JH: Yes.

MILLER: And then the social things. Well, let me just  
finish this. (laughs)

JH: Go ahead. Excuse me.

MILLER: What we didn't realize is that what was happening

MILLER: is that everybody continued to like the architecture but the arrangement of the floor plan was being dictated by a whole new group in academia that handled students, and this was the department of student affairs. There was a vice president and dean of students.

Now, when I went to college and when you went to college, they didn't care very much about you. You arranged your own social program, and you left the campus . . . at least I . . . . They gave me a dormitory room at the University of Pennsylvania, but there was no arranged social life for me.

JH: Well, there was a dean of women and a dean of men, and they were there pretty much to keep you in line and see you didn't do anything wrong.

MILLER: That's right, and they were more academic deans than they were social deans. Well, the theory changed though. And out of Michigan, particularly, came this group of people of my age anyway that got out of school right after World War II with this new social philosophy. And they organized these floors into democratic living areas where they had to participate. And you had to go to dances and you had to do this, and that was part of the rebellion and why kids moved out of the dormitory.

Well, now we picked this up through the use of our behavioral surveys and when it came to designing the Lincoln Quadrangle, we said we think you'd better give up doing any more high-rise and give an alternate form of living. And those apartments remained fully occupied during the great rebellion of everybody moving away from the campus. Now, of course, the trend is because of economics to move back into the campus because apartment living has become prohibitive for most students to do.

JH: I think many people don't appreciate the fact that a building has to be designed well in advance of its actual construction.

MILLER: About two years, sure.

JH: So trends change, and there you are stuck with something that was valid at one time.

MILLER: That's right. And can be out-of-date before you

MILLER: open the door. But . . . and that's why we were trying to use all the new tools that we could find to determine what was coming, you know. And that's why Lincoln Quadrangle came along. And the Lincoln Quadrangle also won several design awards.

But it got a most interesting award one time as being one of the most humane buildings that had been designed. It has a scale. We're thinking again of scale . . . of the fact that people could be on the third floor and looking down and recognize and see friends and talk to them. You know. And there was a security angle there, too, that was very good because you can . . . you enter all of those off interior courts, and that was a concern that came up in the '60s. You know, how do you prevent people from rioting through. It's funny how these things that we don't think about now that we're into the '80s . . . how really difficult that period was of '68 to '72 where we were trying to adapt buildings with big glass windows to this new phenomena that we hadn't thought about, you know.

JH: Were those the last dorms that were built at Indiana State -- the Lincoln . . . .

MILLER: Yes. Yeah, those were the last ones.

JH: Those are on the north end of the campus really.

MILLER: Yeah.

And then much of our effort was transferred to the beginnings of the Evansville campus, and we don't need to get into that discussion here. But it was a chance . . . I'll just say this in passing, that probably one of the most marvelous things that I had happen to me in the architectural world was to take 300 acres and really come up with a total concept and set the whole tone and the style of the buildings down there.

JH: And this you could do at Evansville?

MILLER: This I could do at Evansville, and that does have a very logical plan, although the whole growth rate now of universities is so muffled that it will never really get beyond where it probably is now as a small commuter school of 2,000 and 2500. And, of course, Indiana State, which was scheduled in many

MILLER: people's minds to be going for 25,000, is going to be for the next 10 to 15 years and probably forevermore at somewhere between 10,000 and 14,000.

JH: Well, now in the meanwhile though, was the library the last building you put up here?

MILLER: The library . . . well, it wasn't the last. I think maybe the nurses' education building was after that. But I think that probably the library is the best building that we did, frankly.

JH: Oh, do you?

MILLER: Yeah. That has a handsome classic form. It's an abstraction arranged within symmetry. Now technologically, that is really quite different, too. Because all of those exterior panels including the windows in them can be removed and changed and repositioned on the front of that building, all the way around. If the interior modifies so much . . . because they didn't know where libraries were going or whether we were coming into the zippy-zooty age of all entirely electronic retrieval of information, (why, no one knew what the future was) so that building can be absolutely gutted out on the inside, a new plan established, and then we can go back and unbolt all of those panels and move them around to fit a whole new semblance of a building. And it still remains, though, a classic form of building; and all you're doing is, you're rearranging the abstractions around the outside.

END OF SIDE 2

TAPE 2-SIDE 1

MILLER: All you have to do is rearrange the panels within the formal facade and what you have is still a formally-organized building and you've rearranged the abstractions.

JH: Was this an innovation architecturally?

MILLER: Oh, yes, I think it really was. It was a major innovation because what we learned on the residence halls is that we got in trouble pre-casting these exteriors when we split them at a window. Then we had to come up with a material that would weather-proof the window all the way around when the water was running down the joints. So we incorporated the



MILLER: windows directly into the panel, and this makes it much easier to control that kind of technology. It's a . . . to my mind, it's a formalist building. It has a classic simplicity and it really deserves fronting on a park.

Our style is changing a little bit here. We're getting away from some of the informalities that we were trying to bring into my early work, for example in the home economics building, which is a relatively informal little building. It looks like an academic building, but it's the scale and the way you sort of hide the entrance a little bit and the use of materials are . . . I think it just has . . . and its relationship to the street and its maximum of heights. It doesn't have any grandeur to it. And it was meant . . . we were in a period in which we were getting away from the beaux arts concept of buildings, and we were trying to be informal and friendly. Much of our impetus was then coming from the Scandinavian designed percepts that were set in this way.

JH: Well, now the library does face on a park. Were you able to achieve this through pressure?

MILLER: Well, this was planned. Yes, this was planned into it at the time. It took time for that to develop, but it is sort of . . . because Alan Rankin also felt that the library was the statement of the University. We wanted a building where the mass and the breadth of the building carried it as an important building. And you get that best by being more formalist.

JH: Well now, in the meanwhile, that little Bowman building has been remodeled into a little theater. This is past your time.

MILLER: This was past my time . . .

JH: Does this fit with your thinking?

MILLER: No. (laughs)

JH: I see.

MILLER: No, not really at all. The other side of the park to the north where the Bowman building is is a happenstance. It's another thing where the economy's not there. All of a sudden universities are without

MILLER: money, and it was better done that way than not done at all. But it's a building that has little speaking for it in the way of either a sculptural form . . . . It's not a very good building of its era. And it sits off to the side as a sort of a common piece in what could have been really the development of a major statement for the university up there because the fine arts center was to go to the north of that park. If that could have been done in also a performing arts center and a fine arts center . . . if that could have been done in that same rather classic contemporary thing, it would have given a whole new breadth to the campus, I feel.

JH:           However, that building sits lower, and it doesn't intrude . . .

MILLER:       Doesn't too much. Now . . .

JH:           . . . too much.

MILLER:       Well, it's not a building that has very much to say, (laughs) so it can't intrude too much.

JH:           Well, so therefore it . . .

MILLER:       Yeah.

              The other thing that I think is very good -- and it's particularly good because it welds the urban fabric into it -- is the round tower that is a supplement to the student center that serves as the gate. We had no place to sort of enter the University. The streets ran through it, and it wasn't practical to try and put gates at places, you know, or to ring a wall around it in that way.

JH:           So, now you're back up on Mulberry . . .

MILLER:       I'm up on Mulberry and being right across from what is sort of "church row" in the city. I think that that has a nice dignity to it. Again, it's in the latter period of my work, and it has a more formal statement to it.

JH:           This is the so-called "link" building?

MILLER:       This is the link building between the Elks, which is a part of the Student Union now . . . . It's a very simple form. We had limited all of our

MILLER: work on that campus after my first experiment with the blue porcelainized wall, which I . . . I don't think was a mistake. But I don't think it was . . . it wasn't a piece of technology that was very important then. I think I used it once or twice after that and decided it was one of those trashy kind of things that I shouldn't have been involved with to begin with. But we limited our materials to the brick that was predominant on the campus and to limestone. The limestone had been in the initial brick buildings and had been used around the bases of many of the buildings and in the steps. And when we went into the pre-cast concrete, why, we took the limestone and used that as the aggregate in the pre-cast so that it came out looking like limestone.

Now, the link building is actually slabs of limestone. The economy changed and pre-cast became more expensive, and they had learned at that point how to really cut limestone very thin /to/ reduce the weight. That's an interesting little transfer that happened /which shows/ how all of these forces play so much on architecture.

I guess really we ought to quit talking about the campus and sort of talk about the town and its relationship.

JH: What were the influences that shaped the changes in the town, well, during your period of time in Terre Haute, which is within your experience? What was Terre Haute like when you came here?

MILLER: Well, Terre Haute when I came here . . . Wabash Avenue was the main shopping street. It was the center of all activity in the community. It had survived the changeover from mass transportation to the automobile. It hadn't survived it very well but it was still there. And it was clean in comparison to how I remembered it as a young man or a boy when I would come here and visit in the coal-burning era.

JH: Yes. Don't you think that was the soft coal?

MILLER: Oh, it was a dirty town when I was here, and I could understand why people moved out and into the suburbs. But on the other hand, it was now cleaned up and it was pretty pleasant that way, and people

MILLER: were sort of scrubbing their buildings and doing a few things like that.

JH: Now, your offices then were in the old Opera House.

MILLER: We were in the Opera House building.

JH: On North 7th Street.

MILLER: Unair-conditioned space, and you'd stick to the drawings in July (laughs), and you'd freeze in that radiator system in the winter time, and the theater was downstairs. My uncle had been there for years. They tore down the Opera House building, and we moved over to the Tribune-Star Building and took the entire top floor. Then when my uncle left the firm . . . Al Vrydagh retired, by the way, in 1960. So the three of us practiced together for five years, and then he decided that he wanted to go to California to be closer to his children and spend his last years with them (he's still alive to my knowledge). And Warren, I think, left the firm in about 1964 and lived to be 83 and passed away in the '70s.

We then built our own buildings on South 3rd Street because of what was taking place in urban renewal. We could get a piece of land, and we thought we were going to be here forever; and so we built a building that we could expand into because by this time we had quite a national . . . I had quite a national reputation in university work, and we had opened an office in California. I really did see that Indiana State at some time was going to stop, and Terre Haute wouldn't be large enough to continue the kind of quality of firm that I wanted. So we had opened an office in California, and we were doing . . . we did the master plan for the University of San Diego, and we were doing work on the east coast. So our office really was quite a hubbub; we were up to 60 people, and we were traveling everywhere (laughs) at that point in time. And it was at this time in my life when I became a consultant for Ford Foundation and was going back and forth in the late '60s and early '70s to South America to consult with universities being designed in the South America area.

JH: What changed this?

MILLER: What changed this? Like Hamlet, it was sins of omission rather than commission.

MILLER: We had a mayor in Ralph Tucker, who couldn't see beyond the door of City Hall. He just could not conceive really. He had no ability to futurize. He was, as we both know, personable.

JH: Oh, indeed!

MILLER: And ~~He~~ /he / really had a lot of people in the palm of his hand when he was in office. But Terre Haute . . . but now, you can't blame it all on him! We had no force in the society that was comparable to rising to the force that Alan Rankin and Raleigh Holmstedt brought to the University or that circumstances brought to the University. And these two men were chosen to carry that . . . to carry the banner, you know, into the field.

And appeal after appeal after appeal was made by the University for Terre Haute to get its act together and become good neighbors. And many attempts were made. There were a number of active people. Paul Pfister was young at that time (he was older than me by some ten years), but he was fairly influential in trying to get things happening downtown. Herman Becker was in that group. Let's see, I'm trying to pull names out. Now, the attorney . . . he's still alive here. Oh (laughs) . . .

JH: I'm sorry, I can't help you because I . . .

MILLER: Who's the partner of David Day?

JH: Oh, Howard Batman.

MILLER: Howard Batman was one of . . .

JH: Of course!

MILLER: . . . the older men who saw that something could be done with the downtown. But they didn't have the power, and there was no leadership in the power of things.

JH: Was there a problem within the merchants themselves?

MILLER: Oh, I think it's about the time that all the local merchants were being sold out to the national chains and the national chains were looking at the

MILLER: new phenomena of the suburban shopping center. And when Warren's plan for the arcades down the streets (laughs) never materialized, why, it was . . . it was just . . . the only place where the enclosed shopping mall could be done was out on land that hadn't been built on. It was just far too expensive to tear things down.

Valiant attempts were made when the Fairbanks building was torn down on the corner of 7th -- after the fire . . .

JH: Seventh and Wabash, yes.

MILLER: Seventh and Wabash. The Faileys -- both Biff, Sherman and his uncle -- employed us to put a 6- or 7-story parking garage there. And it was to be tied through on every floor to Sears. Well, a parking garage couldn't support itself without being open to the public generally, and Sears wanted it reserved purely for their patronage, you know, before they'd sign a new lease. Well, that would have meant even at that time, a 6- or 7-million dollar investment into a 3-year lease that they were willing to sign. And it could not have served the rest of Wabash Avenue which was important. But Sears was feeling their oats in those days as being the leader of the new merchandising. That's sort of funny to see that since they're on the verge of bankruptcy now, you know, and having so much trouble. How these times change.

But they were . . . they thought that they were the leaders and that they didn't need anybody else. And, in truth, they didn't at that period of time.

There was also some very bad mistakes made. We had an urban renewal program to clean up 3rd Street, and it did take all the houses out, and we know that the married student quarters are along there and . . . . But the pressures of the established landholders in the town were so much on the city council that they restricted that area down there severely in terms of height of building and what could go into it. So Ward's is the only thing that was ever allowed to be built there. And what happened was that they set up the classic situation where the developer from out of town walks in and says, "No one's got their act together here," and he leapfrogged the whole thing and went down to Honey Creek Square.

JH: And that's really what the impetus . . . now in the meanwhile though, Meadows Shopping Center had been . . .

MILLER: Meadows Shopping Center as a strip neighborhood center had been built, and they never took advantage of it to make it into a regional shopping center. But maybe they couldn't have. I-70 was another thing that Ralph Tucker never could imagine what was going to happen with it, you know. The volume of traffic he couldn't see. And I've talked with the state highway people; and, my goodness, Greencastle has two exits (laughs) and all these little towns have so many; and we only asked for one, which was the . . . which we had to have which was the interface with /U.S. 41 going south. (continuing to laugh) And we did finally get one up at /State Road 46, but we're still short about two that would relieve the pressures on many things coming into the town. One at 13th, I think, is really a necessity and . . .

JH: Well, of course, all these things . . .

MILLER: . . . and maybe one at 25th.

JH: . . . are under contention now.

MILLER: Well, nobody wants them now because the city has actually . . . the commerce district has shifted. I don't think under the best-laid plans, and particularly with the government pulling out of the business of helping developers re-develop, I think, that the downtown Terre Haute will not be more than a little shopping area for the region and for the University. The impetus that the amount of money that /has/ gone into the whole south end now is just too competitive. No one's going to pull out of there for 20 years.

JH: Of course, we also have in Honey Creek Square area this complex, disastrous traffic situation because of bad planning or lack of planning, I guess . . .

MILLER: Lack of planning, it really is.

JH: . . . just lack of planning.

MILLER: Yes, it is, just really lack of planning. Well, it's . . . of course, that will be helped a little bit by cars getting smaller. . . that they'll be more maneuverable. And, too, I suppose people /will/ recognize that that is now the center of the city as

MILLER: far as commerce goes, and /that/ our chances in this nation of going back to mass transit over the next 20 years are pretty small. I think we're going to have different vehicles and different fuels, but I just don't think we're going to give up very quickly on this individuality.

On the other hand, if a mass transit system does come up because these are regional, you know, it's still all concentrated in one place.

JH: That's true.

MILLER: And there is no competition in the sense that those little . . . the neighborhood strips, whether they're north or whether they're east, never had the vision to go any further. They never tried to enclose them in a mall or provide the circumstances that people like. You go to Honey Creek Square and the phenomena is that this is a social center for teenagers and for older people. And you see all of your . . . you know, if you want to see all of Terre Haute, you sit on one of those benches down there. And it's the new Town Square. And unlike Indianapolis that has a whole series of these on the ring road where, as regions, they pull only from that region and the downtown still has a function of being the centroid. In Terre Haute this has become the centroid, and I don't think you're going to shift that very easily. And the other centroid is sort of the governmental-university thing, and so 3rd Street is going to be now the most viable street. And the old National Road has lost its prominence, not only because of I-70 but because it's not on the pole any more of attracting forces, you know.

JH: Um hmm.

MILLER: So it's become just another arterial in the town. Really, that's what it amounts to.

JH: Before we kind of wind this thing up, I would like to ask you what you think the future of architecture . . . apparently the practices of architecture have changed radically in your lifetime.

MILLER: Oh, I'll say they have!

It's very hard to be a predictor of things and at most you have a short-range view because you . . . the things that affect architecture the most heavily



MILLER: being economics and then the political facets, the social facets, and to somewhat technology, I don't think will change as rapidly in the future as the change we've seen. If anything, they're going to diminish a bit and perhaps more thought will go into things before they're done. When you get into a golden age like this, it's surprising how little quality came out of it. Because things were so rushed, the demands were so great, money was so available, you had to get it up and get it in use, (laughs) you know. And I don't think that probably we produced any more quality as far as the real architecture of roots is concerned than our grandfathers did in percentage. It was just more.

JH: Are we training fewer architects now?

MILLER: No, we're training more architects. We're training . . . there are as many kids in the schools studying architecture right now as there are in the whole professional practice.

JH: Oh, my goodness!

MILLER: And we're sort of like lawyers and everything else; we don't know what we're going to do with all of these people except that it's a good background for a number of things to go into. It makes you more aware. It's a very fine study of the humanities and of history, and it's a good liberal arts thing, you know. And you can go into many fields with it, so I'm not really concerned about it so much.

JH: But you chose to move from Terre Haute to Indianapolis.

MILLER: Well, I did that with the demise of building at Indiana State University and with the expense of travel, and we found it somewhat impractical to go all the way to California to keep our office open out there. In '73 there was a recession in architecture and firms such as ours in California that were highly specialized . . . . All university work stopped at the same time, and I felt it best to close the office because we had only been there a short period and we weren't as well established in other segments of the market as we were in university work.

I think the expensive travel is going to make

MILLER: architecture much more regional. We've had a very close partnership arrangement with a Fort Wayne office. We're now making . . . we're still going to be partners, but we're making those offices absolutely independent because we can no longer afford to shift people back and forth and keep them at the local hotel while they're working in Indianapolis. And we're going to have to be more autonomous.

I think it's going to computerize heavily on information retrieval, and I think that architects will be able to study things, probably no better than they did but faster than they did. You'll be able to do your perspectives on a light tube, and you'll be able to sit there and rotate the building in front of you so that the perspective . . . and you can be able to really walk around that building.

JH: So the presentation will be quite different?

MILLER: Presentation will be quite different, and you . . . I hope that architecture never loses that ability to draw, but that may be one of the things that we may be sort of coming in because the computer can take the worst scribbles and make them look pretty good.

JH: What's the bulk of your work now?

MILLER: Oh, ah, hospitals. We are doing some university work still for Indiana University, a big project. Jails are popular in the marketplace (laughs) today in our law-and-order society.

JH: What about banks?

MILLER: Not much in the way of banks. We do banks but we don't do many of them. I think that the bank building era is sort of over. I think banking is going through quite a crisis.

JH: Indeed.

MILLER: And it's being infiltrated by all other kinds of people that offer you better checking accounts and more for your money and money-mover certificates and things like this.

JH: Does the economy now dictate to a very large extent what can be built?

MILLER: Well, the economy has been dictating because the government has emphasized certain things. We've done a lot of housing for the elderly, because the bonds were tax-free that were sold to people with a lot of money that they wanted to shelter. That may be on its way out. I think industry . . . in the immediate future I think the rebuilding of American industry is going to be the biggest things. And I think that defense department contracts . . . until we get over this little ruckus we're in with the Russians, they're probably going to be fairly big right now.

I think many of the social kinds of architecture and, certainly, university work is just not going to be very frequent. That's going to be quite infrequent.

I think that the re-establishment of churches and schools and everything is hanging, waiting to see what happens with the city fabric. There is quite a tendency to move back into Indianapolis right now. It's the only way that you can get a lot of space somewhat cheaply. That's going to be gone in a very short period of time, and whether we'll start rebuilding to accommodate people moving back in to get away from energy costs . . . . You know, we figured in our office the other day that the outlying periphery right now of Indianapolis suburbia, the place where all those who are on the up (laughs) -- those who are climbing the economic ladder -- want to go and where most of the people coming in from out of town settle is a place called Carmel. Now, if you leave Carmel and come downtown in a normal size American car and park and go back, it's about a 7-dollar trip.

JH: Good grief!

MILLER: And there are not many secretaries that can afford that, and there are not many junior executives that are going to be able to afford that; so I think everybody's waiting to see what happens with the city.

JH: Well now, how would that compare to Terre Haute?

MILLER: Well, Terre Haute doesn't have the distance problems, and they certainly don't have the cost of parking problems because there's more parking downtown in our place right now than there are buildings.

MILLER: Honey Creek Square, of course, is a freebie sort of for parking; you pay for it in the purchases you make there, because somebody has to pay the freight for that space. And our distances aren't very great in a town this size. I think that probably all of the housing that exists sort of south of Wabash will continue to be well used. That never did deteriorate that much really. It was the avenues to the north that sort of deteriorated, so that might be all reinforced and fixed up again. And I think the suburban development is going to be small, but I think we've seen it --that it is developing mostly on the south side because it's following the shift of the center, again, of the town.

JH: Was that perhaps, initially, a factor because of the railroad? I had the feeling always that going north . . . maybe it's because I always lived in the south, but going north you ran the risk of getting hung up on the railroad.

MILLER: Getting railroaded, yes.

I don't know. People who live north, and particularly those very nice houses up around the park, never seemed to think that that was nearly the problem that those of us who lived south thought. (laughs)

JH: Well, perhaps that's true.

I think I need to ask one more question before we finish and this is, what's going to happen to all these new architects that you're bringing in now? Are they going into urban planning more than just architecture?

MILLER: I think that there will be a lot of continual planning, yes. They are going into that. I think that many of them are going off to be architects for industry or architects on staff at universities, architects on staff at hospitals, particularly; I think many of them move off into the field . . . many of them move off into art. Some of them move off into being manufacturers' representatives. It's going to be interesting to see how we absorb an awful lot of our professional youngsters that are coming out in the fields of law. And they may have to all transfer over and be doctors. I don't know. (laughs)

JH: And in closing, what about the mobile home? That is a whole new ball game, is it not?

MILLER: Well, it's not so new. It's been with us ever since the end of World War II, and it's been upgraded, and it probably is the only way that people of small income can get a house of their own; and it certainly has changed the concepts of space. Now, the builders say that if we get enough people changing their concepts of space . . . and let me give you an example.

Young people right now are very content to buy homes of 1,000 and 1200 sq. ft. We haven't seen that since the end of World War II when the . . . what was the huge developer on the East Coast that turned out those homes by the millions for our generation that really started raising their families in very small homes and then added to them? Evidently we're back into that kind of an era. In just a couple of years, it changed people's perceptions that much.

JH: Don't you think this is partly because so often now both the husband and wife are working? There is much less maintenance time.

MILLER: Oh, sure. There are two things about mobile home design. One is that because they're built in a factory they don't have to observe all of the local codes that a regular house has to, so that they can do them cheaper. That's the first thing.

Secondly, they have concentrated on a very intense set of built-ins which makes small space exceedingly useful.

Now, what's coming out of the design profession right now is just this. If you move into smaller quarters, it's going to have to be better designed, not worse because it has to really open up to take in 20 people or close down and make you feel like you've got a variety of things that you can do in the same space. And that's a thrust that we're not used to and that we have to re-accommodate ourselves to do.

Somehow, to get housing that's affordable, great compromises have to be made between the building trades unions and the product. And we've got to eliminate . . . as we know, these kinds of politics are very hard to do. The mobile home industry has not really risen to the occasion with what is good design. And maybe we have to re-adapt what can go on our big

MILLER: highways and give them a chance to have wider homes, you know, instead of these long, narrow slits that we have to live in because of the load . . . or of the limits of width that they can travel the highways.

JH: Most mobile homes, as I understand it, really are never mobile. They bring them onto the lot and they . . .

MILLER: That's right.

JH: . . . pretty much stay there.

MILLER: Then they stay there; they take the wheels off of them, and they put them on a foundation, and they weatherproof them, and they do all these kinds of things. Now, they are poorly insulated, and they oftentimes don't have very good furnaces, and there are tragic results because of this. But, on the other hand, it's all some people can afford in the lower economic ranges of society.

JH: So perhaps the new architect should address himself to this problem?

MILLER: Well, if he does, he's going to have to do it within industry. He's going to have to become an industrial architect and cope with this kind of production and all. It's a whole different set of technology, you know. Mies Van der Rohe thought in his theory of buildings that he was going to bring design into the industrialized, technical world where it no longer mattered whether a building reflected what went inside it. It reflected only the use of the materials. And all of his buildings were put together, practically, by sculptors (laughs) to get what he wanted, you know, in that refinement because he never really did get to the point where he could address bringing in component pieces from a variety of industries and putting them together in an industrialized way. And that's a whole . . . it's a different design discipline. Really it is.

The furniture people approach it more than anyone else. By the way, we were talking about how things change, and, of course, the Italians are now the great interior and furnishings designers. They have the most in their sort of bulbous use of foam, and they're really taken the field right away from the Scandinavians which

MILLER: looks a little quaint. Isn't it funny that this happens in your lifetime?

There are a couple other things that I think we should say in ending up. I've mentioned briefly that Terre Haute failed in its political leadership and in its business leadership. And the merchants couldn't get themselves together to act as a cohesive unit; they were all trying to out-struggle one another. And we didn't have an Irwin Miller like Columbus Indiana had that unified that city. Lugar did it under the political umbrella for Indianapolis, and Fort Wayne just had a very cohesive understanding among their business people of what they wanted to accomplish. So, these three cities sort of moved ahead; and Terre Haute, unfortunately I think, has ended up in the south end in its shift of centroid with buildings that are even less well done for its era than Wabash Avenue was in its era.

Now they're no longer of wood and they're no longer the firetraps. But as you pointed out, the planning is atrocious and the quality of the aesthetic environment is even worse. It just . . . it looks . . . it is so barren. There is no thought to landscaping; there is no thought to a formalized statement; it really looks as though you're doing all of your shopping in buildings that are very temporary in nature.

And . . . so . . . when I was studying urban psychology with this Bryan Hulme, I came to the conclusion that cities are reflective of attitudes. And I think that Terre Haute . . . the greatest importance in Terre Haute is really in the home and in the various clubs that people belong to -- all the way from the Country Clubs to the American Legion. And consequently, little thought is given to where it the population does its business. It's meant to be purely utilitarian and it looks that way. And also I think that we're at a level of consciousness in this community where beauty is . . . beauty of surroundings is sort of like dressing too well; it's a little suspect. It's suspect of being immoral (laughs), and there is a feeling that we shouldn't really put that good a face on things, you know. We ought to be more common man. And those aren't bad values, but they're different values from what can keep an architectural firm engaged and busy, and that's another reason why I felt that I had to leave. Indiana State reached

MILLER: out in its golden period and really tried to do something and gave the leadership, but it didn't quite have the power to carry the rest of the community along. And it was just a circumstance of time, I think, that we had the kind of people we did. One man could have made a difference in that period of time, and it /he/ wasn't there.

JH: Well, maybe that person will come along in the future. We hope so.

MILLER: It could be. Could be.

JH: Thank you, Ewing Miller.

MILLER: Oh, you're welcome! (chuckles)

END OF TAPE



# NARRATOR DATA SHEET

April 13, 1981

DATE

Name of narrator: Ewing H. Miller

Address: 326 N. East St., Indianapolis, IN 46202 Phone: (317) 635-1661

Birthdate: October 5, 1923 Birthplace: Toledo, Ohio

Length of residence in Terre Haute: 1955-1980

Education: University of Pennsylvania, B.A.; Master of  
Architecture

Occupational history: Architect, life-long.  
U.S. Air Force, WW II

Special interests, activities, etc. Contemporary art, canoeing,  
wilderness backpacking, camping, painting, pottery, reading,  
opera, ballet, travel. For additional information, see Terre Haute  
and Her People of Progress, 1970, 160-161. (Vigo County Public  
Library Special Collections)

Major subject(s) of interview: Experiences as U.S. Air Force  
officer and Prisoner-of-War in European Theater during  
World War II.

No. of tapes: 1 - No. 3 Length of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Terms of legal agreement: \_\_\_\_\_

## Interviewing sessions:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Interviewer</u>
April 13, 1981		164 Allendale Place Terre Haute, IN 47802	Jane C. Hazledine

EWING H. MILLER

Tape 3

April 13, 1981

At the Kenneth Hazledine residence -164 Allendale Place  
Terre Haute, IN 47802

INTERVIEWER: Jane Hazledine

TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen M. Skelly

For: Vigo County Oral History Program

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JH: This is Monday, April 13. I am Jane Hazledine. I'm speaking with Ewing Miller, who is an architect but whose interest at this point we seek concerning his having been a prisoner of war during World War II and some of his experiences during the war.

Ewing, how did you happen to go into the service in the first place?

MILLER: I was the right age and I had no other skills (laughs) to keep me out, which happens to all young people. I had just . . . when war was declared in Europe . . . I was a sophomore, I suppose, in high school when the Germans invaded Poland. I remember that summer because we were traveling -- my mother and my grandparents and myself, as I remember -- through New England. And my mother said, well, how fortunate it was that the war had started because I was far too young and would never be involved in it. Well, that shows the misjudgment of trying to predict the future.

By the time Pearl Harbor occurred, I was a freshman in college; and unlike our more recent wars, why college didn't really . . . being a university student didn't really set you aside. Everybody had to go.

Now, in trying to think over where I would end up, there was something about the sea that didn't really appeal to me, I suppose. And to allow yourself to be drafted meant that you were going (commences to laugh) into the infantry or worse. And being my size, particularly, and not being a person who felt hand to hand combat was the most delightful thing on earth, why I decided that the Air Force was not only glamorous but it gave you machinery to play with. And yet it was the edge that a small person gains where he's equal. You know, it's an equalizer in that sense.

JH: I think . . .

MILLER: And that proved very true. So, I enlisted.  
(laughs)

JH: You enlisted. Well, I think I was going to ask because it's interesting to hear now in retrospect these many years later, what was the attitude of college students towards the war and the military at that time? This'd be 1942?

MILLER: Oh, there was a tremendous enthusiasm, you know, to get in. We had been attacked. Our nation had . . . we had lost our whole, entire Navy /Pacific fleet/ and we were in . . . thought to be in jeopardy, certainly not nearly as much as Europe. Everybody probably feared the Japanese, I suppose, more than they feared a German invasion at that point.

And there was tremendous sympathy with England. And I was thinking about that when I was on my way over to do this tape on this subject. There was also . . . because there was a naivete about the war and its cost, there was the feeling among the students, I believe, almost to a person that . . . how do I want to put this? We just spent our whole life being involved in studies, and here was a chance to get out and do something. And here was a chance at a very early age to end up in very important positions.

JH: So, in a small way there was an ingredient of adventure . . .

MILLER: Oh, most certainly!

JH: . . . that mainly lured and attracted.

MILLER: Um hm. And for kids who came out of the Depression the thought of travel and the thought of having money paid to you to do this and the thought that you were going on a big camping spree (laughs) was just fine. And we didn't think about the fact that you got shot at (continuing to laugh) in the process!

JH: All right. Had you been a flyer before?

MILLER: No. No. No one could ever afford to get near an aircraft in those days, you know. That just didn't exist for anything but the super, super rich.

JH: Where did they send you?

MILLER: Well, they had to take so many of us in so quickly that we ended up in all the good hotels in Miami Beach.

JH: I see.

MILLER: (laughing) That's the only place they could quarter us. And that was really quite humorous, because they didn't . . . outside of drilling and just sort of getting you used to the fact that you were in the military and had to obey, why the greatest excitement that we had was being guard on the beaches. And, of course, everything in the moonlight with the waves coming in looked like a German submarine full of invasion spies. And I suppose we fired more rounds of ammunition at old logs (laughs) and scared the poor civilian population half to death.

JH: How long were you there?

MILLER: Oh, we were there probably three or four months until they could make arrangements. And then the next set of arrangements they made was really to keep the colleges open that they had just taken us out of. They put us back in /the/ university for a period of about six months until they could get us into the flying program.

JH: Did you go back to the University of Pennsylvania?

MILLER: No, I went back to Cincinnati. (laughs)

JH: Oh!

MILLER: Which was sort of nice 'cause it was close to my home and I could see my mother and my grandparents with some frequency.

We studied mathematics and English and much of the same things that we had (laughing) been doing

MILLER: before, except now we were in uniform and we had quite a . . . . Oh, there was an extensive athletic program to sort of condition us. And we did get a little flying in little Piper kind of Cubs that . . . . But those things, they were just not . . . they were nothing more than kites with a motor on them. (laughs) But we did get a little flying time that made us think we were cadets anyway.

Then we went to Texas into the cadet program from there. And to the big field of San Antonio where we took all of this battery of tests. And an interesting thing of this stuff is that I have been followed for most of my life by follow-up surveys.

JH: Oh, you have?

MILLER: Oh, yes.

JH: They keep in touch?

MILLER: They keep in . . . not the Army! Not the Air Force! But other groups that use the same data, that wonder what's happened to us -- how successful we've been, what's been our income, do we consider ourselves to have led a good life, what would we rather have been. And there have been some interesting results out of it really.

JH: Well, now are these available?

MILLER: I think there were . . . . Well, they're undoubtedly available to various research groups that pick up the data and then ask new questions about things. Now, I think that there were . . . I was told at one time there were 20,000 cadets that they singled out and I happened to be one of these.

JH: Oh, so it was sort of a random . . .

MILLER: Oh, it was a random . . .

JH: . . . selection?

MILLER: Yes. Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. You couldn't afford to do the whole . . .

JH: To be followed.

MILLER: . . . three million or five million . . .

JH: I understand.

MILLER: . . . people that were in cadets. But . . . so /of/ the 20,000 of us, 5,000 -- these figures are rather staggering -- 5,000 were lost in training.

JH: Oh, really?

MILLER: I'm sorry. That's not true. Five thousand were lost in training and combat -- of the 20,000. And then another 5,000 had been lost over the period of time, either by moving or by dying of other diseases and things of that nature.

JH: Well, what happened to you?

MILLER: So there are only 10,000 of us left. Now I don't know how many there are because I haven't been contacted in the last five years.

JH: In other words, when you received these questionnaires, you were supplied with statistics concerning this group.

MILLER: Yes, they'd always answer you. Yeah. Yeah, they . . . one was a thing in which they were wondering . . . oh, they spent a great deal of time wondering whether we had chosen the right vocation after we got out of school. And so they gave us a very complicated test. And fortunately, I suppose, I came out ranking fairly high as an architect. But I would also have made . . . and then they listed six other things, you know, that I would have been successful in they would have thought. And surprisingly, a lot of it was in the field of psychology.

JH: Which you're interested in.

MILLER: Which I was interested in and they had no way of knowing this at all.

JH: That's interesting.

MILLER: Yeah. But that's a little far from the war.

- JH: Yes, indeed. And . . . well, just to continue this though before we leave it, you did go on and continue your original education which was architecture.
- MILLER: That's right. Yeah. I went back after service.
- JH: And I would presume that many of them did not.
- MILLER: I suppose that's true, too. I suppose that's true.
- JH: Was this whole group college-educated or starting college?
- MILLER: You know, I really don't know but it just seemed to me that the Air Force was a very homogenous group of people, unlike the Marines or the infantry that was really the bag ends of everyone who came along.
- The Air Force was . . . I suppose today would be thought to be the upper middle-class, white WASP /White Anglo-Saxon Protestants/ (breaks into a laugh) in many ways. We were all fairly much the same breed.
- JH: All right.
- What happened to you then after San Antonio?
- MILLER: Well . . .
- JH: How long were you there?
- MILLER: Oh, probably only two or three months while we were doing all of this training. It was really quite a bore, as I remember. And you tried to find yourself a job, as I did. I became head of salads in the officers' mess. And you did this because this got you a pass. You were one day on and you were two days off, or something like that. And the pass got you into town. San Antonio was really sort of a pleasant town even at that time, with its . . .
- JH: Now, to establish your status here, you were unmarried . . .

MILLER: I was unmarried. I was known as a cadet.

JH: . . . and you came from Toledo, Ohio, at this point.

MILLER: Yeah. Aviation cadets, I think, ranked about the same as privates as far as pay were concerned. (laughs) You had a few more privileges.

JH: But at least you were relatively footloose then, so far as your individual . . .

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: . . . life was concerned?

MILLER: Oh, yes. Yeah. I was . . . I enlisted at 17 so I was just barely 18 when I went into this.

JH: Where from there?

MILLER: Where from there? Then we went up and we took primary training in what were known as PT-13s. These were open cockpit two-seaters that were marvelous aerobatic ships. We really learned to fly beautifully in these aircraft. And it was quite romantic, because we wore the leather suits and the leather helmets and the white scarves (commences to laugh) and the . . .

JH: Just like the pictures.

MILLER: . . . (continues to laugh) and the goggles and the white scarves trailed out behind, you know. But they were . . . and there's nothing like flying an open cockpit plane to do these kinds of aerial maneuvers because when you first . . . that first time that you roll over and the seat belt lets loose a little bit (laughs) because you haven't tightened it up quite enough, you know, why you really know that you're . . . that that belt's all /that is/ between you and the ground down (laughs) below.

JH: That must be pretty scary, really.

MILLER: No, it really wasn't. It was really a thrill. They were so . . . they were marvelous aircraft to



MILLER: fly. They really were. And we had quite a good time in them. And it was . . . that was near Sweetwater and Abilene and, oh, it was cold. It was so cold in the winter up there, and that's when we were there most of the time.

Then you had to make an elective choice when you . . . well, no, that's not quite true. We went there for basic training, which were more complex aircraft. These were aircraft where the landing gear retracted and they had extensive flat area on them. These were called BT-13s. Now, these were very difficult aircraft to fly. And they were sort of a transition -- basic train/er/ number 13. And we lost quite a few young men in those.

JH: How were they lost? Was it inept . . .

MILLER: Oh, they'd start in . . . it was lack of experience, and they were just aircraft that you had to be on top of all the time. They had very peculiar characteristics. They would start to spin and they couldn't get them out of the spins, you know. If the . . . particularly if they . . . if the power was on full. Or they'd panic.

And then we lost a number to just nothing more than what is the bravado of the times. Somebody trying to loop an aircraft and roll his wheels along the ground, you know, and he misjudges and hits. There was the normal kinds of things because we first started night flying here and it's just the misjudgment or getting lost or these kinds of things that happened.

JH: What kind of guides did you have for night flying at that time?

MILLER: Well, we had nothing like what we have now. You know there've been so many advances. We had a radio compass. We had . . . we had air communication with the tower. The trouble is that if you were out there, we didn't have any distance measuring equipment like they have now -- the DME, the radar. We had no radar that was used for this purpose; and if you got caught in a storm, why you had to . . . you really had to work yourself over what was a

MILLER: very inept way of finding the runway. It was a radio signal and you had four quadrants to the signal. And you had to find out which quadrant you were in and then try to get on the beam. And you remember that old term of being "on the beam"? Well, you tried to get your aircraft on the beam between two quadrants and that lined you up with the runway. And there was nothing to tell you whether you were too high or too low. You had to fly to what was known as an outer marker beacon; and then you set a rate of descent or a letdown, and then you tried to fly this radio beam. Well, if there was a heavy wind, you kept getting blown off the beam and you'd have to crank your aircraft around in almost like a sailing ship. And you'd have to put it on sort of a tack, you know, to get it back in and hold it on that. Well, needless to say, why it was a hard thing to learn and when you're brand new at it, why many didn't master it in time.

And we tried not . . . they tried to keep us out of the weather at that point because we weren't experienced enough, but it wasn't always possible.

Then we finished there and that was . . . at that point then, you had to make a choice as to whether you wanted to go multiple engine or single engine. And I don't know why, I chose to go multiple engine, I guess. So, I went to Houston to Ellington Field, and we trained in advanced trainers that were twins. And we got quite a bit in the way of instrument work at this time, how to fly instruments through bad weather. And when we graduated from there, why this is when you became an officer and you were ready to go into the transition training on combat aircraft.

JH: All right. Now, what date would that be? How long did it take you to go through this process?

MILLER: Well, let's see. I enlisted in /T9/42. I was taken at the beginning of '43 and we graduated in '44, the class of E . . . which would be "A" January, "B" February, March, April, May of '44. And then I think we had two weeks that we came home to visit -- sort of a rest period.

- MILLER: And then I was assigned to a school of A-20s which were twin-engine attack bombers, very much fighter aircraft in a sense, but they were very much a pilot's aircraft. And you went in . . . these were used to back up advancing troops. You'd go in and you'd skip your bombs into objectives, you know, like tanks or gun emplacements or things of that nature. They were very fast. They had . . . almost all of the armor was pointed to the rear on these because nothing much could get in front of them. So anything that was after them was going to be chasing them, you know. (laughs)
- JH: Was this a single . . .
- MILLER: This was a three-man . . .
- JH: Three-man?
- MILLER: Three men, yeah. There was . . . and you were all separate. There was sort of a bombardier-navigator-gunner for the front. There was the one pilot and then there was a gunner to the rear.
- JH: Were the gunners capable of flying the craft in case of emergency?
- MILLER: No. Besides they couldn't even get to where you were.
- JH: I see. So, you were it.
- MILLER: It was that small a craft.
- Then we trained in those for a period of time.
- JH: And where was that? Where did you train in those?
- MILLER: This was in Nebraska. And then they arbitrarily pulled everybody out of those and out of fighter aircraft and everything and put us on in B-24s, which were four-engine things. And those aircraft you were supposed to be over 5'11" and over 180 pounds. Well, here I am at 5'8" and I weighed all of 145, probably. (laughs) And that airplane used to lift me right out of the seat on takeoff. There were no hydraulics that took over. You really had to manhandle them. And, of course, they were

MILLER: huge bombers and they were meant to do everything but fly. They were just (commences to laugh) . . . they weren't . . . they were designed to carry a heavy load very high and very long distances. But they were just absolutely . . . if anything failed, they were a rock. They just fell out of the sky.

JH: Did they take you on, you think, because of the need for pilots and you were well-trained and . . . .

MILLER: Um hm. It was coming to that point in the war where the Luftwaffe had been fairly well eliminated. And they /the Allies/ were really bombing the heavy industry of Germany, and they really needed more of that type of pilot.

JH: Now, where did you train the B-24s?

MILLER: Well, that was also in Nebraska. This was in Lincoln, Nebraska.

And then we moved out to Idaho -- Mountain Home, Idaho. And our crew was made up there and we began most serious training for going overseas.

JH: How many in the crew of the B-24?

MILLER: Well, it varied. But basically, there were two pilots, there was a navigator and a bombardier; there was the upper gunner; there was the belly gunner -- that's six. There were two waist gunners, eight; and the tail gunner, nine. Now, sometimes you carried a photographer, depends upon where you were in the formation. And you would find as many as eleven people on board at times depending on their specialty.

JH: Were they in ready contact with one another?

MILLER: Yes, we were all connected by radio and most of us could get to one another on a ship that size. There was a catwalk down through the bomb bays that you could go down through.

JH: When did you . . . where did you go then from there? How long were you at Mountain Home?

MILLER: Well, that was about a six-month training period.

We were on our way overseas by the summer. If we graduated in May, we spent the summer in transition and we were on our way overseas by early August.

JH: And this is 1945?

MILLER: 'Forty-four.

JH: 'Forty-four, we're still in [nineteen] forty-four.

MILLER: Still in '44.

JH: All right.

MILLER: We were assigned to the 15th Air Force. We were taken by boat. We landed 'way down on the heel. I joined the 449th Bombardment Squadron.

JH: In Italy?

MILLER: In Italy, yeah. Of the 15th Air Force.

Now, let's see. What transpired during this period of time? We had not taken Rome at this point, because I flew a ship into Rome, oh, about four days after it was liberated and spent four or five days there when it was still being flushed out of the German troops that were leaving. We took medical supplies up in a bomber. We would . . . all of Egypt had been cleared out at this point. That battle was all done and the troops were . . . . We helped support the invasion of southern France on the coast around toward Italy. We would fly to Cairo to pick up whiskey for the club. And it was always sort of a laugh for all of us, because everybody would complain if we were overloaded with bombs, that we couldn't get off the ground. But they'd never throw a case of whiskey out.

JH: (chuckles)

MILLER: And there were several times when we took off (commences to laugh) the runway there in Cairo and we actually just practically flew right down through the streets because we were so heavily loaded we

MILLER: couldn't get any . . . we couldn't get the aircraft in the air. (laughs heartily) And there would be goats and chickens and people just going every which way 'cause they thought this thing was coming in on them.

JH: (joins in the laughter)

MILLER: Oh, dear. Those were . . . they weren't care-free days in many ways. (laughs)

JH: Well, what took you into actual combat then, now?

MILLER: Well, the bombardment group then was raiding . . . I flew the last raids at Ploesti, for example -- the oil fields, before they fell to the Russians. Our squadron had almost a 200% turnover on Ploesti. We lost that many people over that period of year. Now, we got in on the last of the raids on Ploesti. We supported . . . we would bomb the ammunition dumps in Greece and Yugoslavia to support the partisan outfits there, the guerilla groups that were fighting on our side. And we knew a lot of these fellows because they were based at a little town called Bari, B-a-r-i, on the Italian heel. We were at Taranto, and these Greek raiders that were outfitted -- primarily by the British -- with high-speed boats and things would go there. We all had the same officers' club.

JH: Oh, you did?

MILLER: In Bari, yeah. Everybody shared the same place you know -- the British and the Greeks and the French.

JH: Was there . . .

MILLER: There weren't too many French.

JH: . . . good relationship between all of you?

MILLER: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's the nice thing about drinking ouzo. No one can make a fist. (both laugh)  
No one could get mad.

JH: A little ouzo and you're all tame.

MILLER: And we were flying . . . the particularly difficult target was Blechhammer. And that had to be in Austria over toward the Russian border because it fell to the Russians while I was there. And that was a great relief to everybody.

We were shot down in Vienna and Vienna was the synthetic oil capital. It was to synthetic oil what Ploesti was to real oil.

JH: What were the circumstances surrounding your actual being . . . actually being shot down?

MILLER: Well, we . . . you would make these raids and . . . let's start back even a little further. You'd wake at about three in the morning and you'd go to the briefing room. You'd get dressed and go to the briefing room where they would brief you on the target for today. And this was done . . . . It all seems so antique now in comparison to what we have available because it was big charts and maps and the lighting was very low, you know. The capability of generating electricity was not nearly what we have as a capability now. So many advances have been made. And they would try to brief you on the weather. Weather information was very spotty. It was not a science nearly to the extent that it was 40 years later, practically. And they would tell you that beyond a certain point you couldn't have radio communication back /to the base/ because it would be too monitored, you know. They couldn't . . . we could have radio communication between aircraft.

You would then go to breakfast and those that were religious went to their little church services for the last rites and things of that nature. And then we'd go out by jeep. You'd pick up your 'chute and you'd go out by jeep to the aircraft in the dark. It was usually cold and an Italian wet. It wasn't snow but it was not a very comfortable climate even in the wintertime, in the wintertime particularly.

JH: Now, what time of year would this be? This was winter?

MILLER: Oh, this would have been . . . yeah, this would have been starting October. I think we started flying missions in September or October and we went

MILLER: through January. And then we were shot down in February.

You'd climb aboard the aircraft, and you'd . . . they'd have a little generator to start your first engine. At a certain time you'd start that first engine -- at a pre-arranged time that everybody was agree on -- and you'd hear this whole airdrome just come alive with engines, you know, because there were four squadrons to a group.

JH: How many planes does this mean then?

MILLER: Well, this would . . . if there were eight planes to ten planes to a squadron, then you'd have 32 planes to the group. And then the group would form . . . there were six groups to the wing, you know. And you'd begin to start one engine after the other, and then you'd see a flare go up from the tower. And the flare meant that the first squadron started to move up behind the squadron leader.

I had gone over with a captain as a copilot. And then he was taken away very quickly because he had quite a bit of experience. Then I got another copilot and I became the primary pilot.

You were assigned a position. The day we were shot down we were flying the deputy lead for the group. We were right off the right wing of the lead aircraft. This was more significant for our bombardier than it was for anything else. It just meant that if . . . everybody dropped on the first bombardier. Even though every plane had a bombardier, everybody was tracking the first bombardier trigger because he was the man with most experience. So everybody dropped on him unless there was something that was just so far off that every plane had to go off on their own.

Anyway, these planes would begin to line up. You'd begin to move in and this was all done in darkness with very wee little lights so that you weren't distinguishable, you know. And you'd take off one at a time. There's something about a prop /propellor/ engine that has an entirely different sound to it than a . . . it's a rougher sound than a jet. A jet has a whine to it, but a prop engine



MILLER: really sort of bites at the air, you know. And you'd get all these aircraft - 30 to 40 aircraft -- strung out. And they'd all be taking off on what were these steel mat runways and crushed rock runways, you know. And you'd wait until the last . . . until the fellow cleared the end of the runway before you started your run. And it was very tricky because you'd get caught in the turbulence of that prop and you had to be very much on your aircraft.

And then you'd form into squadrons. The first fellow would turn in long and the next one would turn in a little shorter. And everybody would be turning in in a tighter and tighter turn until you formed your formation. And then once you got your formation and the other four were in formation -- the other four squadrons -- why then you'd form into your group of . . . which was the same delta thing. And this thing began to get very big. And then you'd form into the wing of four groups. And pretty soon you'd look out as the sun came up and you'd see 3,000 aircraft all heading in the same direction.

JH: Good grief!

MILLER: Just like a wave of predatory birds, you know. And it was a long flight. Most of the flights were 16 hours. They were long flights.

JH: Sixteen hours! And you had to be on it and alert and . . .

MILLER: That's right.

JH: . . . with it.

MILLER: All that time.

Now, you were covered by fighter until you got very much to the Austrian border. Then some of the long-range fighters could go in with you, but they wouldn't go . . . they wouldn't stick over the target. You . . . everybody came in on what they called an initial point. Wave after wave would maneuver out, and they'd come in on an initial point on which everybody would then turn and start the bomb run down because we were after an objective. Well, by the time that the second

MILLER: squadron or the second group, let's say, was on its way (laughs) in, why the Germans knew very well what we were after and they had brought then all of their anti-aircraft to bear so that the sky would just literally turn black in front of you. And they would be searching for altitude and searching for hits. And they would just . . . they would put up this barrage that you had to fly through. And we were hit a number of times. You could hear it go through the aircraft.

Now, the pilots were back in sort of mummy cases of very heavy steel. We were back, pushed into these things so that we had some protection from this.

The gunners were probably the most exposed in this sense. We were hit with such a direct hit that there was no chance of doing anything with the aircraft at all.

JH: Now, can you describe for us your feelings at this point? In retrospect, can you reconstruct?

MILLER: Yeah, it's . . . yeah, it has remained very clear in my mind. We were going along and suddenly I was aware of the silence as though we were gliding. All the engines had stopped, evidently. They had . . . what had happened is that they had hit us right in the middle of the bomb bays, and we were still wired. We were still loaded, so in the next few minutes then the yellow smoke came up out of the bomb bays and into the cockpit and I knew that we were on fire. And then there was this explosion which you never heard. It was just a force. You could feel the puff. And I . . . we went . . . the aircraft just jumped and went up in the air and it flipped over. And I remember it sort of coming when we started down in a spin. And this was a huge aircraft. I could see the other aircraft trying to get out of its way -- the other aircraft in the formation trying to make room for it to go down through.

By this time both the copilot and myself were out of our harnesses. Now, the thing that was very fortunate for me, as I mentioned, I was undersized to fly the plane. And I was wearing a 'chute

MILLER: because I was too small to get up toward the pedals. And so the 'chute being . . . I took my chances and said, I've got to have something to push me out of that big metal piece (laughs) back there because I can't reach the pedals on this aircraft as conveniently as I could. The 'chute helped with that.

So, I had mine on. The rest of the crew had what they called chest 'chutes. They had the harnesses on, but they had to pick up a pack and they had to snap it on the front of them.

JH: So, they didn't customarily wear this all the time?

MILLER: So . . . no. And the poor gunners were trapped in the gun emplacements, and I'm sure that they never even got out of the gun emplacements. That was just . . . the aircraft was being in such a violent set of reactions by this time.

I can remember cold air coming in, and I thought to myself the canopy has blown off. And the only other thing that I thought was, you know, I just wonder what's going to happen to my mother because I was an only child and for some reason the thought of death itself, I was not afraid. Things were happening too quickly, I think. You just almost accepted it as inevitable, you know. We've been hit; we're going down. And you wondered how . . . and I'm sure that probably every man on that ship thought of his wife or something of the same kind.

JH: Yeah. And since your father was long gone . . .

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: . . . she would be alone.

MILLER: Yeah, she would be alone.

So, that's where my thoughts were. Then I passed out from lack of oxygen. And what happened, I can only surmise. The fresh air that I felt was the fact that the canopy by this time had been wrenched off, and I just fell out of the aircraft in one of these violent twists that it went through,

MILLER: just threw me clear.

JH: And the 'chute was organized to go?

MILLER: No. The 'chute wasn't. No, the 'chute wasn't. We were at 25,000 feet. This may also have saved my life, the fact that I was passed out and didn't panic and pull the 'chute because I would have frozen at that altitude in a very short period of time. It was terribly cold. It was something like, you know, 80 /degrees/ below /zero/ up there.

JH: Good grief!

MILLER: And so I fell to a point where I began to pick up oxygen. Now, you begin to regain consciousness at about 10,000 /feet/. So, by the time I was fully conscious I estimated that I had fallen 20,000 feet, and I was now at 5,000 feet.

JH: But you did regain consciousness.

MILLER: But I did regain consciousness. And then I pulled the strap on my 'chute and I couldn't get it loose. And I remember reaching around behind and grabbing ahold of the pack itself and tearing it. And you know you just have strength beyond your means at a point like that, you know. And it tore the pack open, and then I could get the pin loose on the harness on the front and on the cord, the handle that you had that you were to pull. And then the 'chute opened.

And then I . . . and then I was probably at about 4,000 feet and I was descending rather rapidly. Well, I noticed that I had lost my boots at this point and gloves and things, and it was sort of bitterly cold. I was . . . ended up landing in a snowbank. And I wasn't . . . I had just unstrapped myself from the harness and was trying to gather my maps and my currency and . . . when the German air force . . . ground forces were on me and took me prisoner.

JH: All right.

MILLER: So, I didn't have a chance to hide or a chance to do anything.

JH: You were, in other words, taken in instantly.

JH: Where were you?

MILLER: Well, I was north of Vienna. It was a little town. I never really did learn the name of this little town. We were one of the first waves in. As I best remember, they really took me to an air raid shelter; and there were 13 or 14 people in there, civilians and soldiers. And everybody was sort of ho-hum about the whole thing. They'd been at war a long time, after all. And they said, "Oh, it's a small vacation for you," you know.

JH: Oh!

MILLER: The war . . .

JH: Well, now you weren't hurt, I take it?

MILLER: The war wasn't . . . . Pardon?

JH: You were not hurt?

MILLER: I was hurt in the left leg, but I didn't notice it too much. It was sore. I had banged it hard on going out, as I later discovered, but right then it was not bothering me. They had picked up a gunner from another aircraft that had a piece of flak in his bottom, and I can remember taking off my jacket and putting it over him because he was suffering from shock and was cold and was in tremor.

Then they . . .

JH: Well now, I'd like to stop there.

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: Were there other people from your plane there? Did you have any . . .

MILLER: No.

JH: . . . notion what happened to everybody else at that point?

MILLER: No. No. I had no notion at that point what had happened to anybody at all. But I was not with them. I was all alone for all practical purposes.

MILLER: They then took us into town. We walked into town and I sort of helped to carry this young fellow. And we went before a German officer who asked us all of the traditional things, you know. What squadron we were out of, where we came from. And you were supposed to give the answers of name, rank, and serial number; and that's all you were supposed to give and this is what we gave. And he got very upset. And they took our money and our watches and all the escape kit kind of things that we were supposed to carry, so that we couldn't get very far. We wouldn't know what time it was and we wouldn't know what date it was. And then we were transported . . .

JH: May I stop you a moment? Did they speak English or did you have to interpret from the German?

MILLER: No, they spoke English. And even the people . . . even the Austrians in the air raid shelter, one of the older men spoke English. Walking around in the streets was a fairly . . . that probably was one of the times when I was really frightened because of the animosity of people who had had their town destroyed. You did see on occasion, what was thought to be at least, a fellow American -- it could have been an Englishman or someone else -- that had been lynched under the emotion of the time.

I had . . . when I got to the steps of the city hall, I did have a group that came in on us and hit us with what they could find at hand, you know -- knocked us down. But the soldiers really stepped in and prevented anything more from happening. I think the difference between having been a prisoner of the Japanese and a prisoner of the German, the Germans did get their ethic from the centuries of wars (commences to laugh) that Europeans have had with one another where they do come to some agreement, you know, as to how people should be treated.

JH: Um hm.

MILLER: And the Geneva conventions and things did hold fairly much, wherever they could. And in that sense, it was more of a Christian concept than it is an Eastern concept of value of life.

MILLER: We were taken then by truck to a place where they trained young Luftwaffe pilots. It was sort of the kind of school that I had been in in Texas.

JH: How many in your group at this point?

MILLER: Oh, just two of us!

JH: Oh, just the two of you!

MILLER: Yeah. Just the two of us. And we were . . . we were put in a cell there. And we were put in a cell with other . . . with some of the German . . . the cadets that hadn't behaved that were being . . . they were in their individual cells. Yeah. And they were being punished.

And the food was . . . we ate the same food they did. The food wasn't too bad. It was very short of meat, you know, heavy on cabbage and heavy on potato and . . . but I can't say that we were underfed. And nothing much happened to us there. We sort of waffled around and I can't really remember how long we were there, but it was about two or three weeks.

Then we were moved by train through this beautiful Austrian . . .

END OF SIDE 1

TAPE 3-SIDE 2

MILLER: Well, we were moved by train through this marvelous Austrian countryside. And we were taken then to a prisoner-of-war camp. Now, can you believe it? I don't really think I can remember quite where this was.

JH: Well, did you have any way of knowing where it was?

MILLER: Yes. Oh, yeah, it was outside . . . hm.

JH: Was it still in Austria?

MILLER: No, it was above Munich.

JH: Oh!

MILLER: It was 'way over on the western front, if I have my directions correct. Yes, it was over on the western front. And it was a sizable town. We got off the train at the station. We had two guards. I was amazed at the manpower, you know, that they had to spend on two prisoners. And I . . .

JH: But they did keep you two together?

MILLER: They kept us together. And he had received . . . this boy had received some doctoring. My leg was giving me an increasing problem, and the walking became more and more difficult by this time. They didn't know what was wrong with it. And I didn't know what was wrong with it, but it was very swollen and very hard. And it turns out that . . . that I'm sure that what I had was phlebitis, really.

And then I began to get a set of nodules on my leg which I've carried ever since, which came from . . . I think what happened was that the leg was really just crushed as it went out the side of the plane. It was just . . . and so much was happening that you didn't pay very much attention to it. But it was just black and blue from top to bottom. And I think that that set up a condition where the blood didn't flow very well, and phlebitis set in and all of these other problems that I've had ever since. But we were taken to a center where we were then separated. And this was a huge center for prisoners of war. And we were . . . I was . . . everybody was put into solitary confinement at this point.

JH: Well now, were you interrogated at any time to . . .

MILLER: At . . . here. At this point.

JH: At this point?

MILLER: Yeah, there had been very little interrogation up to this point. And at this point I think that the German intelligence was trying to do nothing more than to match people to squadrons to make sure that things were staying the same or weren't staying the



MILLER: same. But I had insisted on staying with this name, rank and serial number. And so I spent six weeks in solitary confinement.

JH: What was your rank at this point?

MILLER: I was a lieutenant.

JH: All right.

MILLER: Yeah. And being . . . what I didn't know is that I was the only one that survived my aircraft. Everybody else had been killed.

JH: When did you find this out?

MILLER: Well, I didn't find it out until later . . . in this interrogation process. There was a little electric heat in these cells. And the electric heat only came on between about three and five in the morning. Otherwise than that, why you had to exercise yourself. It was a small cell. It was probably about five feet by eight feet.

JH: And what did it have in it?

MILLER: It had nothing but a mat on the floor and a blanket.

JH: And that's all?

MILLER: That's all. And your food was passed to you under the door in a slot. There were no windows. There was a window 'way up high that let in a little light, and it didn't have any glass in it. That was your ventilation.

JH: So it was really cold?

MILLER: So it was quite cold. And it was decidedly uncomfortable in that way.

JH: Well, now what did they do about . . .

MILLER: And if you wanted anything, why you had to pull on a big switch, which evidently made a signal go up on the outside, and a guard came and asked you what you wanted through a little slot in the door.

JH:                   What'd they do about sanitary facilities?

MILLER:             Well, you had to pull on this thing.

JH:                   Then they would . . .

MILLER:             And ask and then they would take you to a central latrine, one at a time.

JH:                   But then they did take you for this, then.

MILLER:             Yeah.

JH:                   So, you got that much walking.

MILLER:             That's right. And then you got . . . you got . . . the only exercise you got is when you went back and forth to interrogation. And this was to make you want to tell everything that they wanted to know, which in essence wasn't really much at this point. You know.

So, after about six weeks, why this captain . . . this Hauptmann said, "We think we know where you're from, lieutenant." He said, "I know you're not supposed to tell." He said, "If you'll just nod your head if I read off these things." He said, "I'm going on vacation." (laughs heartily) And he said, "you'll have to wait eight weeks more in solitary confinement." So, they read off the name of my crew and he said this was out of the 449th bomb squadron. He said it's the only plane in that area that day that was short a person. And I said, "Well, you know who I am then." And I was then taken out and within a couple of days, transported to a regular prison camp, which is . . . was outside Munich at that point.

There was a lot of sort of tapping on the walls back and forth.

JH:                   Was there?

MILLER:             But you were never sure who was on the other side, so you had to be very guarded in the kinds of messages that you sent, you know.

JH: Well, now was this in Morse code?

MILLER: This would be in Morse code. Sometimes if there was a little crack, you could talk well enough, you know, to . . . that if you put your ear right up to the crack, you could hear the other person.

JH: Well now, what did you learn through this grape-vine?

MILLER: Not an awful lot. (laughs) Truthfully. Sort of who the other guy was and the fact that he was as scared as you were. And the fellow next to me, they had threatened to execute him because he wouldn't tell. They were going to execute him as a spy and he was looking for reinforcement. He didn't know what to do. He was a captain, as a matter of fact, I think. And he was . . .

JH: Do you have any idea what happened to him?

MILLER: Have no idea what happened to him. No.

Except that I just don't think that things like that happened. I think that there was a lot of psychological pressure that way -- much like the vacation it was, you know, for me. And on young kids, why that's . . . I would probably be better able to stand that now. Although I think that youth itself is almost an anesthetizing agent. You just can't imagine what might happen to you. You're so confident.

JH: The risk of fatality is not . . .

MILLER: No. It's not . . .

JH: . . . with you.

MILLER: No, it's not with you and I think that . . . I think that when you're young also that you always have such hope about things that you don't realize that things can . . . you know, that they're out of control. You have no control over what's happening to you and maybe the other guy doesn't either, you know.

JH: So, it's part of the need of having a young military.

MILLER: Well, that's true. But on the other hand, I think . . . I think that young people suffer most in that kind of solitary confinement thing because they don't have that much to fall back on. I was really going through my memory for everything I'd ever learned, you know, in the way of . . . hymns, prayers, poems, (laughs) schoolbook kind of things and . . .

JH:: Well, how did you consume your time?

MILLER: Exercise was a great part of it.

JH: What kind of exercise? Calisthenics is about all you could do.

MILLER: Calisthenics is what you did. You did pushups and situps, and you got as far back in the room as you could get and try to look out this little window and see if you could see anything up there. An occasional bird might go "flillllt" -- flit by (laughs). I thought if I could ever see a tree again, you know, life would be all right.

You did a lot of searching back into things that you had learned and that's . . . extra schooling really helped, you know -- even having been a freshman at college which wasn't, certainly, a very . . . a large amount of learning. But it . . . there was more there than I thought that had been retained by the memory.

JH: You . . . now you were . . .

MILLER: But it was a long time. It really got to be fretful hours.

JH: But you're . . . as an artist yourself, did you have any inclination to make drawings or do anything like this? Did you have anything to draw with?

MILLER: Well, no, there was nothing to draw with. No.

JH: There weren't any loose stones lying around that you could . . .

MILLER: No. No. There was nothing at all that you

MILLER: could rely on. I hung my trousers over the electric heater the first night I was in there and burned them right off (laughs) at the midpoint when the heater came on and I woke up with all this smoke and pulled the signal. And the guard I can remember coming to the door said, "Gottinhimmel." (laughs heartily)

JH: Well, did they give you more trousers?

MILLER: Yes, I got a pair of trousers (continuing to laugh) somewhere along the line. But goodness only knows what ragtag army they came out of. They were . . .

JH: Well now, during this period of time then, you were wearing the same clothes . . .

MILLER: All the time.

JH: . . . all the time . . .

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: . . . which didn't get washed, obviously.

MILLER: Which didn't get washed. Now, they did . . . we did get showers on occasion in cold water with some soap, once we got to the main prison camps. But the picking of fleas and lice was a long occupational thing that we did daily, you know, so that we wouldn't get eaten up by these little pesky var-mints.

And then the prison camp became another thing. You were in a barracks of 40 people, and there was a lot of plotting. And there was a re-establishment of military authority, ranking commander, you know - that kind of thing. Everybody sort of assuming a position in what will we do if -- you know. If we get liberated, how are we going to protect ourselves? If they try to annihilate us, we might as well die fighting. You know. How will we do this?

JH: You were all together then in . . .

MILLER: Well, there were 7,000 in this camp.

JH: No, but I mean within your own area. How many

JH: of you were together in . . . for communication purposes?

MILLER: Oh, I suppose . . . you know I just . . . I really can't remember that probably very well. I suppose there were 700 or 800 Americans in one thing. And then the British would be next door and the French would be over here, all separated by barbed wire so we didn't . . .

JH: So, you couldn't communicate?

MILLER: Well, we could talk across the fences. But we couldn't get at one another.

JH: Well, now what were your living quarters here? Were these just . . . was this just one huge room?

MILLER: This was one huge room with bunks with screening -- you know, big wire mesh that you sort of slept on. And you slept in your clothes. And I think we had one or two blankets that we'd wrap up in.

JH: You did get a blanket?

MILLER: Yeah. And there was a straw kind of mattress on the thing, you know.

JH: Which was full of lice, no doubt?

MILLER: Yeah. Yeah.

JH: You're still in your same clothes now?

MILLER: You're still in your same clothes, same everything. You know, you don't get a haircut. You don't get shaved. You do get a Red Cross package by this time.

JH: Oh! All right.. What did the Red Cross do for you?

MILLER: Oh, well, it provided a lot of extra food when it came through. I was always surprised that it wasn't rifled. It was . . . they came through fairly intact. They would have . . . it all depends on where it came from. The Red Cross packages from India contained all kinds of strange things that we didn't know how to use. Millet, what do you do

MILLER: with it? You can't . . .

JH: You eat it.

MILLER: . . . you can't chew it. (laughs) It's just too hard.

Our things contained C-rations and they contained chocolate and they contained small packs of cigarettes and corned beef and things like that that were very welcome adjuncts. And the Red Cross from Switzerland was in frequently, you know, to see that the packages were coming through. Now, this really did get disrupted toward the end of the war. There just wasn't any movement of rail, and it was spasmodic at best during the period of time that we were there. It made you feel, at that point, that it wasn't so bad because you began to meet British fellows that were taken in Africa seven years before, you know.

JH: Who had been there all that time?

MILLER: Who had been incarcerated all this period of time and who had probably dug out and tried to escape a number of times and were recaptured, you know. But by the time I got in, why it was a capital offense to steal food. And they assumed that if you were gone more than two days, that you had to steal food. So that at least the threat was that if you were gone more than two days and retaken, you'd be shot.

JH: I see. Did you try to get out?

MILLER: No, there was really no way by this point. And the other forces were advancing sufficiently. Now, the radio operators did make little radios, little canaries they called them, short-wave radios. They made them out of such odd things as razor blades and then they'd bribe a guard for a crystal. And they'd manufacture earphones and they would do all of these kinds of things. And somebody would monitor the canary. And it would be . . . in inspections, it would be passed from hand to hand just ahead of the inspecting forces so that it was always sort of protected. And I suppose it's a game that we played. They knew that it was there and as long as they kept it somewhat under control, it was an outlet.

JH: Um hm.

MILLER: But escape became a thing then that wasn't thought quite so necessary because the forces were coming from the west.

JH: And you had the feeling that things were winding down?

MILLER: Winding down, yeah. Yes, that's true.

JH: Did anybody in your group try to escape? In the area where you were, to your knowledge?

MILLER: Not that I can remember. I think that if . . . probably if people were still plotting escapes, it would have been the British. They just . . . they would save all of their chocolate and all of their cigarettes and when they were marched into town on work detail, to help clean up the town, they'd pull out their chocolate and smoke their cigarettes. So that it would just infuriate the Germans. (laughs)

JH: (laughs) It was psychological.

MILLER: It was really a psychological warfare. (continuing to laugh)

JH: Well, then did you go into town on work detail?

MILLER: No, I did not because by this time my leg was so bad that I just couldn't walk at all. And secondly, officers did not have to do that. This was more for enlisted personnel. They could be asked to do these things under the Geneva convention.

JH: What kind of work did they have them doing?

MILLER: Oh, picking up bricks, clearing streets, rubble from the bombardment -- things of that nature.

JH: Um hm.

Were the guards decent to you?

MILLER: Yes, they were much older men. They were men in their 60s, you know. They were . . . they were the age of Kenny and me. That's what you were



MILLER: called upon to do when . . . in Germany at that point. So . . . and there weren't that many of them, really. They had very good control by the use of dogs. You had to . . . you had to stay inside your barracks at night because the dogs were loose in the quadrangle . . .

JH: In the yard, yes.

MILLER: . . . around in the yard. So you had to get past them first and then get through the fence and then get through the searchlights and then get through the barbed wire before . . . before you got out.

JH: And this didn't appeal to you at all?

MILLER: No, I don't think . . . I think . . . well, in the first place, I don't think military discipline would have allowed it unless there was a really well-constructed plan. I suppose if somebody went berserk, why, you know. Part of the discipline . . . part of the toughness of this kind of thing is . . . the part of the discipline is that when people were caught doing things, such as a man was caught in our barracks stealing food and had been doing this for a period of time . . .

JH: Where'd he steal it? You mean stealing from one another?

MILLER: He would steal from one another, yeah.

JH: Oh, gracious!

MILLER: And this was just . . . when he was condemned by a regular court martial, they just simply pushed him out the door.

JH: Oh, dear!

MILLER: Into the yard.

JH: So that took care of that.

MILLER: That took care of that.

JH: Well . . .

MILLER: And that was our form of keeping people in line.

MILLER: But you didn't make unilateral decisions. You weren't . . . it wasn't a sole thing like in the films where you made a decision to escape, you know. Now, maybe in other areas where there was less discipline -- in the French forces that had no allegiance, you know -- maybe these kinds of things did. The British were very . . . in the early part of the war when they thought that maybe there was such a long period of time that there was no hope, why they really did try some very novel and very well-planned escapes. And some of these succeeded. And I guess some didn't.

JH: Didn't.

MILLER: They tunneled for ages and it gave them something to do as much as anything. It gave them a cause that kept them sane, I suppose.

JH: Psychologically, how did your fellow prisoners hold up? Do you feel that as a group . . . now these were all Americans you're with now?

MILLER: These were all Americans. By this time they were a potpourri of . . . there were quite a few of the what . . . well, they weren't Green Berets at that time. But what were the parachute troops that had been taken in Normandy? There were a number of fellows from the 101st /Airborne Division/ that got so badly cut up in the /Battle of the/ Bulge. /Dec., 1945/ I had made particular friends with a young fellow from . . . oh, Oklahoma. Now, when I say he was young, he was ten years older than me. He was 29 or so; I was now 19 then. And he had . . . he was a battlefield-commissioned officer. He had been part of a company in southern France that really got cut up and there were only six or seven left. And he picked up the bar and commissioned himself because he was a corporal and he was the ranking one. And so he made himself a battlefield commission. And then the whole . . . the group was taken prisoner.

He was . . . he was a good one to know because he taught me a lot about self defense and was one of the ones that was in on the planning of how do we preserve ourselves if they try to annihilate us, you know. And . . . anyway, life went on in a very

MILLER: sort of tedious day to-day way. You spent most of your time thinking about cooking, trying to keep yourself somewhat clean, liking it when the sunshine came out, making up funny little games that you could play, and listening for the reports of the oncoming advance.

JH: Through this little crystal.

MILLER: Right.

JH: Did you have total freedom? Were you . . . were there any responsibilities thrust upon you at all?

MILLER: Well, there were roll calls in the morning in which everybody had to sort of line up and be accounted for. Other than that, there wasn't much in the way of responsibilities.

JH: But you could talk to one another so you had a . . .

MILLER: We could talk to one another. That's true.

JH: . . . lot of communication and this is probably what kept you glued together.

MILLER: Yes, I would say so. Yeah, I would say I think it would have been much more difficult if you'd been thrown in with a pack of people with whom you didn't have a language in common. Well, many of these were Air Force, too, because the Air Force was the ones that were taken most. I was with a Jewish boy who'd been a fighter pilot who had been shot down and sort of badly burned on his face but had recovered. It wasn't too pleasant to look at but . . . . He . . . it . . . sometimes you would almost volunteer to go out and do gardening just to get out into something different, you know. You'd go out and dig potatoes or something like that.

JH: Did you garden?

MILLER: Well, I didn't because of my leg. But a lot of people did.

JH: But they were permitted to do this?

MILLER: They would take . . . they would call for

MILLER: volunteers for a work detail. And you'd -- even the officers -- would volunteer for this to . . .

JH: Just to get out.

MILLER: . . . to get out, yeah.

And the days passed sort of slowly and then we began to hear about the imminence of the advancing armies. And to make this story . . . to cut it somewhat short, we'd begin to notice fewer and fewer guards around. And then there was sort of a vacuum, and they sent . . . the rumor went through the camp that they had sent a German command car to take the ranking colonel, who was an Air Force colonel, to meet with the advancing armies and to sort of find out how these people were all going to be taken care of.

Well, we . . . we had moved. In between, we had moved further south toward Italy; and the rumor was that they were going to take us into the Italian mountains and hold us forever, you know. And I had been moved by train 'cause I couldn't walk. I then had given my new boots that I had been given somewhere along the line . . . I gave those to somebody who didn't have boots and who had to walk. And the train experience was something else because moving in Germany at that time by train in a boxcar when the /Allied/ fighter pilots controlled the air and they didn't know whether you were ammunition or people that it was . . . . It was a very hair-raising daily experience where they would come down and shoot up the train. And then we'd have to get a new engine; and we'd sit there for days, you know, waiting for a new engine to come.

JH: And you just felt you were a sitting duck at this point, I'm sure.

MILLER: Yeah. Yes, I'm sure. I'll say. I'll say so.

JH: So, you were all packed together in boxcars?

MILLER: Yes, we'd be 60 people to a boxcar. And somebody'd be stationed up to look through the cracks

MILLER: of the boxcar, and he'd yell, "They're coming in," and we'd all try to get down on the floor underneath everybody else, (laughs) you know. It wasn't . . . it wasn't the best of human experiences because it was sort of . . .

Jh: How long did this trip last?

MILLER: Oh, it lasted 10 to 12 days. It was a long trip.

And then we got to this new camp where we were . . . and the crowd got bigger. By this time we had Russians and we had a lot of African troops, and they were very cantankerous. They were really a ragtag army, you know. And there was little control.

Well, anyway, they . . . one morning we woke up and they . . . the machine guns on the towers were all turned in as . . . we couldn't understand that. It was . . . they were usually trained along the borders. And the word had come out that we were to stay in the barracks because the SS /Schutzstaffel Defense Detachment/ had taken over and they had been told to execute all the prisoners. Well, a couple of Sherman tanks came up on the horizon and just knocked off every one of those towers.

Jh: Ah! That was the rescue.

MILLER: And that was . . . Yeah. This was the white horses, you know.

Jh: Yes.

MILLER: Coming in. The U.S. calvary.

They came on and they swept right by us, and the infantry followed by. And they were throwing us all these C-ration bars, and everybody got sicker than dogs because we hadn't had any of this for a (commences to laugh) long period of time and it was far too rich. And then /General George/ Patton came in. And he was not more than four hours behind the advancing troops. And he was a large man with sort of a high voice, as I remember.

Jh: Oh, really?

MILLER: And he got up on this big thing and he said, "We're gonna take the next bridge on the river. It's crucial. Anybody want a gun can come with us!"

JH: Oh, for heaven's sake!

MILLER: (laughs heartily) And we all got guns and went down to the river. And by that time the bridge was fairly well taken, so we were just sort of then a marauding army on the loose. And he just . . . he jumped in his jeep, and I remember the sirens were going and he has his two big pistols on his . . . his pearl-handled revolvers. And he said, "Come on." He said, "Come on. We'll just go kill more of them!" (laughs)

JH: Dear!

So you joined up with Patton?

MILLER: So, we joined up with Patton for a very short period of time, and then the logistics of things was that we just couldn't move that fast with him. We were . . . we were ill and we were underfed. So, within a couple of days everybody had sort of straggled back in. And then the next echelon of people came in to start moving us out.

JH: So, you really went back to your own camp?

MILLER: So, we . . . well, then we were moved 'way back . . . . Yes, we were moved back to the . . . we went back to the camp because there was food there and there was medicine there by this time.

JH: Where was this?

MILLER: Well, this was . . . we were . . . we were probably about 75 to 100 miles north of the Italian border. We were quite close to Innsbruck . . .

JH: Ah! So you're back in Austria.

MILLER: . . . by this time. Oh, yes! We were . . . we were just moved south and south and south, you know, as we [the Allied forces] came down.

I've just recalled the first place I was taken

MILLER: to was Oder, Oder am Main. And then we were moved to Munich and then we moved further on down toward Innsbruck when we were overrun.

JH: Yes.

MILLER: So, then they really set up an airlift and they took us to a camp called Lucky Strike, which was one of the main evacuation bases when they were establishing the foothold.

JH: And where was that?

MILLER: Well, this was on the French coast.

JH: I see.

MILLER: And, oh, it was a swarm and nobody knew who belonged to whom. And this . . . this cowpuncher who had had an 8th grade education, came . . . we flew back together and he said, "You know, Ewing, you've got all this education," and he said, "you've studied architecture." And he said, "I'll never see Paris again." And so we sat . . . well, we thought about it for a day or so as we were sitting in Lucky Strike, and he finally said, "Nobody knows we're here." And so we jumped. And we . . .

JH: Oh, you did?

MILLER: Yeah. And we hitchhiked into Paris.

Now, if you can imagine us. I was in Yugoslavian pants and an American air jacket and an English cap and an American shirt, I suppose. And by this time, I had some GI boots that had been given me.

JH: Well now, could you walk at this point?

MILLER: I could walk numb.

JH: Your leg was better?

MILLER: Yeah. The leg was better. I'd had no medical attention, but the leg just seemed to have cured itself a little bit from all of its problems. It wasn't . . . it was looking rather poorly, but at least it wasn't hurting.

MILLER: The . . . he was worse. And he had a string of hand grenades strung around this way, and we both had some German zip guns of some kind. And we were hitchhiking our way in, and they thought we were part of the free French Army. So, we passed all the way in to Paris, you know. And we got to Paris and we must have spent 10 days in Paris.

We went to . . . we reported in again and told them that we had walked back from (commences to laugh) . . . and we had hitchhiked our way back. And so they paid us a second time, and that gave us enough money that we could stay there. (continuing to laugh) I don't think anybody's ever caught up with that. They were just handing out money to anybody who came through the stores.

JH: It must have been chaos.

MILLER: It was chaos. And Paris was on the other hand just lovely to somebody who hadn't seen anything at all. You know, it was springtime and the little street cafes were open and there wasn't much food, but the girls were pretty. And the banks and the Seine and the buildings were untouched; they hadn't been really bombarded.

JH: And you were free.

MILLER: And we were free.

So, we had a marvelous time. And then we went back to Lucky Strike and reported in again. Nobody missed us and the same people were still there. (laughs heartily)

JH: (laughing) They didn't even know you'd gone!

MILLER: And so . . . they didn't even know we'd gone. And we had two weeks in Paris, and we got back just in time to get aboard the boat and go home. (laughs)

JH: And they took you back to the United States?

MILLER: Right.

JH: Now, how did they . . . how did they get rid



JH: of you so to speak?

MILLER: Well, they took . . . they divided us into sections of the country and I went to Fort Ben Harrison.

JH: Oh!

MILLER: In Indianapolis.

JH: In Indianapolis. Was this because of the Middle West or did you just . . .

MILLER: Yeah. Sure. Because I was going to Toledo, Ohio . . .

JH: Yes.

MILLER: . . . and they gave me a . . . I got all new uniforms and all new this, and I was sent home on a rest and recuperation leave of about three months.

JH: And what was the date?

MILLER: Well, this would have been the summer of '45.

JH: Of 1945.

MILLER: And then toward . . . at the end of my rest and recuperation when I thought I was going to have to go back -- and we all thought we were going to the war in the Pacific -- why, they dropped the first A-bomb atomic bomb.

JH: Ah!

MILLER: And then soon after that the Japanese surrendered, before I really got back into active duty.

So, by the time I then reported in, they were beginning to muster people out. And having been badly hurt and having been a prisoner, I was one of the first. So, I was released in time in '45 to get back to school, if you can imagine. (laughs) And entered . . . went back to the University of Pennsylvania. I think . . . I think that they had delayed . . . goodness, as I remember, they had delayed the opening semester until middle October or the first of November, something like that.

MILLER: And . . . so my life in the military came to an end at that point.

JH: Well now, did you continue on in the Reserve?

MILLER: No. No. No. I was mustered out with a disability.

JH: Ah, yes. That's right.

MILLER: Because by this time my leg was really acting poorly, and they really couldn't find out what was wrong with it. But it has been a source of annoyance ever since, as you know.

The welcoming home . . . you know I sat with a couple of fellows the other night talking about . . . they're both Vietnam /veterans/ and they're very much interested in having the nation recognize what they've done. And one is . . . one was in . . . it was difficult. /He/ wasn't a prisoner but he was certainly in the middle of the firefights over there, as difficult a situation as any of us faced in War II. And I must admit that coming home in that hero capacity . . . coming home from a war that everybody thought was great -- the war to end the wars -- coming home to all the lavishness of parades and people introducing you and people fussing over you, probably did a lot to ameliorate the hurt that everybody had. Of course, it was there. Of course, we were just scared out of our wits most of the time, you know. There's no time in any form of combat where it's comfortable. I don't care. It can be exhilarating and it can be . . . And when you're out of it, you can say, "Wow! I'm glad I was . . . I did it! Or I'm through it!"

JH: But still terrifying.

MILLER: But still /it is/ just awful to have to go through and to have to steel yourself to do it.

And I think you're right. I think that only comes with young . . . young groups. I just don't know how . . . I don't . . . I could not do that. I have too much knowledge of what happens now.

JH: Um hm. Well, is there going to be something

JH:           come of recognition of the Vietnam . . .

MILLER:       I don't know. We're . . . we're going to begin to start a country of people who ought to work on this. I think it's coming . . . I think it's here now. I think people are talking about it, how awful we treated those young men because we just didn't happen to agree with a war that went sour. And we blamed them! And we idolized the people who ran off from their country, and I just never could understand that.

JH:           Yes. And this must hurt them a great deal.

MILLER:       Why, it does! It does. You know to idolize people who ran to Canada I thought was just . . . Well, I think you can disagree with your country and I think you can stand up and say, "I disagree" and, by golly, I will take the consequences. But to run away and then expect to come home, I think is a dastardly act. I don't see any bravery in that at all.

JH:           Does this whole experience color your feeling about the military today?

MILLER:       Oh . . . I'm not . . . I'm not one who lived in my military experiences. I've had too many fine things happen to me, and I never wanted to . . . this is one of the first times that I've ever sat down and sort of really talked the thing through. I never wanted to hang around the bar at the American Legion and swap the stories. That just never appealed to me.

JH:           I never have heard you speak of your experience before ever. You very successfully put that behind you.

MILLER:       Um hmm.

JH:           Well, you said to me when I asked you to do this that it was because so much more of life lay ahead.

MILLER:       That's right. It opened itself up, and it

MILLER: wasn't the big moment in my life to have stopped a shell in an (laughs) airplane, you know. That just . . .

JH: Yes.

MILLER: The other thing is it was . . . that for many years it was a very emotional thing, having lost all of those men to whom I was very close.

JH: Yeah.

MILLER: And having to go back and see their families and talk to each one of the families about what they did and how they lived, you know.

JH: Was there a formalized responsibility on your part or was this something you assumed?

MILLER: That's just something that you assumed. I didn't see all of the families. Some of them were too far stretched and some didn't even want it. You know they didn't want to have to go through that.

JH: I'm sure that's true.

MILLER: But it was sort of a thing, well, why were you saved and why wasn't someone else?

JH: So, in a sense it was a burden?

MILLER: Well, there's the burden and it's a guilt for a period of time, until you get old enough and mature enough to sort of realize that it wasn't your choice one way or the other, you know.

JH: That's right. Fate did this.

MILLER: Fate did this to you.

The . . . the other thing about youth is that the deprivation . . . I don't really feel that I was deprived. Now, I . . . I wasn't incarcerated like the fellows in the Japanese prisons where they were just reduced to bones, where they just hurt you know. They were so starved or the diseases were

MILLER: so bad. I do have to say that with all of the cruelty that the German Reich exhibited in some ways, in other ways it was very much a part of our society that seems to like making war in a gentlemanly kind of way. There was a code, you know.

JH: Isn't that a paradox?

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: Considering . . .

MILLER: Yes, it really is.

JH: . . . the treatment of some sectors . . .

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: . . . at the hands of the Germans.

MILLER: And the American-Jewish fighter pilot got the same treatment as the rest of us although his kin in the German camp wasn't being treated the same way, you know. That's another paradox that even at that time of youth I thought was just so strange.

JH: Now since then, you have traveled in Germany.

MILLER: Um hm.

JH: Did you have any difficulty doing this?

MILLER: I did the first time I went back, yeah. My wife really talked me into going back. Once I was inside, it wasn't so bad. I ran across people who had been prisoners of the Americans, and I told them that I had been a kriegsgefangener and we exchanged sort of stories and it . . . (chuckles) it . . . . We muddled through. I'm not very fond of the German temperament in many ways which I find authoritarian. But I suppose that they're . . . there is as much variance in that people as we have in ours. (laughs) We have some authoritarian in this . . . in our set of circumstances, too -- in our cultural life.

JH: Ewing, we appreciate your sharing this.

MILLER: Well, thank you.

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